

NOVEMBER 1951

COMMENTARY

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On the Horizon—

“The Dybbuk” as Opera

The Study of Man—

The Human Infant According to Gesell

CHARLES ABRAMS

HAL LEHRMAN

STEPHEN SPENDER

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Everett C. Hughes

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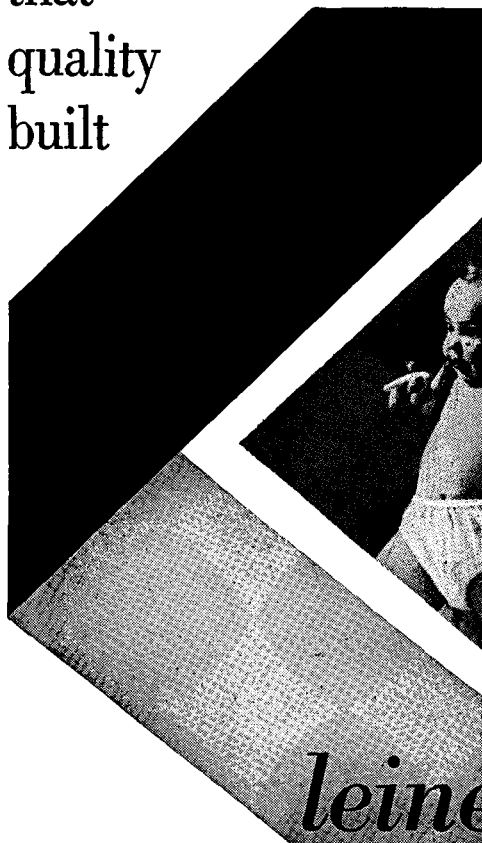
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COMMENTARY

NOVEMBER 1951

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 5

The Time Bomb That Exploded in Cicero	Charles Abrams	407
Ben Gurion Wins and Loses an Election	Hal Lehrman	415
British Intellectuals in the Welfare State	Stephen Spender	425
Is Jewish Humor Dead?	Irving Kristol	431
Nighthawks <i>A Poem</i>	Samuel Yellen	436
Franco: Proud Ruler of a Hungry People	Peter Schmid	437
American Zionists Move Toward Clarity	Judd L. Teller	444
The Mind of the Mass Murderer	L. Poliakov	451
An Apology <i>A Story</i>	Bernard Malamud	460
1,001 Nights in the Yiddish Theater	William and Sarah Schack	465
From the American Scene		
The Beginnings of the Family Fortune	Charles Reznikoff	475
Cedars of Lebanon		
The Angels Bury Moses		481
Noah <i>A Poem</i>	Jackson MacLow	483
On the Horizon		
"The Dybbuk" as Opera	Chemjo Vinaver	484
The Study of Man		
The Human Infant According to Gesell	Isa Kapp	487
Letters from Readers		493
Books in Review		
White Collar, by C. Wright Mills	Everett C. Hughes	497
A Believing Jew: The Selected Writings of Milton Steinberg	Will Herberg	498
The New Yorker Twenty-fifth Anniversary Album, 1925-1950	Milton Klonsky	501
The Impact of America on European Culture	William Phillips	504
Sherwood Anderson, by Irving Howe	Granville Hicks	510

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IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF COMMENTARY

The Jewish College Student

A Discussion

From their own observations of Jewish students on various campuses, a number of professors offer comments on Morris Freedman's much-discussed article "The Jewish College Student: 1951 Model" (October 1951). If The Jewish Student of legend actually existed, and some doubt it, has he changed? For better or worse? Among those contributing: Lionel Trilling, Everett Hughes, David Riesman, Arnold Green, Oscar Handlin, Samuel Middlebrook.

German Anti-Semitism in 1951

Norbert Muhlen

Prime Minister Adenauer's recent offer of a friendly and apologetic German hand to Jews has provoked intense interest and curiosity. One of the questions inevitably raised is the extent to which this offer is made suspect by the rise of a new anti-Semitism in Germany. After an on-the-spot investigation lasting several months, Norbert Muhlen here writes a report on the nature and extent of German anti-Semitism today.

The Aftermath of the British Elections

George Lichtheim

George Lichtheim analyzes the outcome of the British elections and indicates what significance they hold for the future of British democracy.

What to Do about Jewish Education?

Arthur Hertzberg

It has been argued by some that never before in the history of Jewish education has so much been spent on so many to produce so little in the way of Judaism, measured by knowledge, belief, and practice. How true is this judgment—and how fair? And if true or fair to any degree, what can be done about it? Rabbi Hertzberg addresses himself to these, and similar, urgent questions.

The Two-for-a-Nickel Movie

Nathan Halper

Our younger readers may be surprised to discover that the two-for-a-nickel movie, not the television set, was once the opium of the child. In the department "From the American Scene."

Protestant, Catholic, Jew

Will Herberg

Almost without realizing it, America finds itself in a period of religious controversy in which such issues as released time, state aid to religious schools, and President Truman's appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican are subjects of acrimonious debate among the various faiths as well as between "secularists" and "anti-secularists." Will Herberg attempts to pierce the dust of battle and discern the real issues at stake.

COMMENTARY

THE TIME BOMB THAT EXPLODED IN CICERO

Segregated Housing's Inevitable Dividend

CHARLES ABRAMS

ON THE 18th of September, 1951, a Cook County grand jury, investigating the recent housing riot in Cicero, Illinois, handed down a curious indictment. Instead of indicting the hoodlums responsible for the vandalism which denied a Negro the right to live where he chose, it indicted the attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People who was defending him in that right.

MORE than four years ago (in "Homes for Aryans Only," May 1947), CHARLES ABRAMS first reported in these pages on the dangerous pattern of segregation in urban housing which was setting up rigid—not to say unconstitutional—compartments in the historic American melting pot, and preventing the contacts in school and neighborhood that had done so much to create a common national identity. In later articles (February and November, 1949) he showed that government agencies and government regulations were supporting this potentially explosive development. Recently, in Cicero, Illinois, the explosion occurred: an "all-white" community violently prevented the moving in of a single Negro, and nearly destroyed the apartment house which had rented him space. Mr. Abrams practices law, and teaches in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania. He here tells what happened in Cicero (on the basis of materials gathered on a trip there made possible by the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing), relates it to a dangerous national trend, and proposes a program to combat it.

Along with him, the owner of the house, her lawyer, and her rental agent were all charged with conspiracy to injure property by causing "depreciation in the market selling price." The right of a Negro to buy or rent a home, which is guaranteed by the federal Civil Rights Law of 1866, was thus declared to be null and void in Illinois.

For many, the implications of the riot and of the indictment were too ugly to be faced. The riot was variously held to be a nasty incident that doesn't happen too often, a wicked occurrence in a wicked city that is the haunt of Al Capone's former mob, an eruption provoked by "alien" Czechs and Poles who have not yet learned the American way of life, a teen-agers' lark that got out of control, a rumpus started by Communists—and it is not surprising that the grand jury added the interpretation it was all a "Negro plot."

Yet behind the Cicero affair lies one of the most disturbing, and what may yet prove to be one of the most widespread, violations of civil rights in American history. Its most ominous aspect is the growing use of legal processes to flout civil rights. The Cicero riot and the Cook County indictment are only the most recent phases of the development.

THE Cicero rioting started when a Mrs. DeRose, who owned a \$100,000 apartment house, got into a controversy with her

tenants and was ordered to refund a portion of the rent. Shortly after, it became known that she had rented an apartment to Harvey E. Clark, a Negro war veteran and a graduate of Fisk University. Movement of Negroes into white areas is nothing new in Chicago. But it was new in Cicero, which, like Dearborn (Michigan) and many similar communities, has successfully resisted Negro settlement.

When it was learned that a Negro was moving into the apartment house, a high Cicero official arrived to warn Mrs. DeRose there would be "trouble" if Clark moved in. The city, he said, could not be responsible for keeping order. Two policemen then came to tell Mrs. DeRose she could not "get away with it." At 2:30 P.M., on June 8, a moving van containing \$2,000 worth of Clark's furniture drove up to the house and was halted by the police. The rental agent was ushered out with a drawn revolver at his back. "At about 6 P.M.," reads his affidavit, "the Chief of Police of Cicero rushed out of the alley nearby followed by about twenty men and grabbed my arm." The Chief told him to "get out of here fast. There will be no moving into this building." . . . He hit me about eight times while he was pushing me ahead of him toward my car which was parked across the street. I was trying to walk but he was trying to make me move faster. When we reached my car, I opened the door and the Chief shoved me inside and said 'Get out of Cicero and don't come back in town or you'll get a bullet through you.'"

When suit was brought against the Cicero police through the NAACP, United States District Judge John P. Barnes, on June 26, enjoined the city from "shooting, beating or otherwise harassing Clark"—one of the most unusual injunctions in legal annals. "You are going to exercise the same diligence in seeing that these people move in as you did in trying to keep them out," said the judge.

Word was then passed along that there would be "fun" at the apartment house. Crowds gathered, tensions rose, and a rock smashed the window of Clark's apartment.

On Wednesday, July 11, some of the white

families in the apartment house, warned of impending trouble, stored their furniture and moved out. By dusk, a crowd of 4,000 cut the ropes put up by the police. Only 60 policemen were assigned to the scene. The uniformed policemen in front of the building stepped out of the way when the crowd moved forward; the plain-clothes men simply mixed with the crowd. Women supplied rocks from a nearby rockpile which were hurled at the windows while policemen cracked jokes with the mob and made anti-Negro remarks. Flares, bricks, and burning torches were thrown into the house, radiators and walls were ripped out, furniture thrown from the windows, and trees torn up by the roots to be burned as the mob cheered. While this was happening, the Mayor and Chief of Police were "out of town."

A few state police and twenty deputy sheriffs under County Sheriff John E. Babb, who arrived Wednesday evening, were at the scene, but little was done to disperse the mob. When the sheriff's deputies asked Cicero firemen to turn hoses on the crowd, the firemen refused to do so without orders from their lieutenant, and he too was unavailable. After \$20,000 in damage had been done to the building, Babb requested the Governor to send in the state militia. The militia finally pushed back the mob at bayonet point, while four militiamen were felled, and only their superb discipline kept the riot from turning into a massacre.

In the end, 19 persons were injured and 117 persons from Chicago and Cicero were arrested. After it was all over, the town council president made a simple explanation—"outsiders invaded our town."

THE Cicero riot received more notice in Chicago than usual. For two days the news had been played down and in fact most Chicagoans saw the riot on television before they read it in their newspapers. But when the Governor called out the National Guard, the news broke all over the country, forcing the grand jury to investigate. The jury's bizarre indictment then again made the headlines and protests by the press moved

THE TIME BOMB THAT EXPLODED IN CICERO

the district attorney to drop the indictment against the NAACP lawyer. (The other indictments were dropped October 22.) All this adds up to more "action" than is usually given these matters in Cook County.

What has been forgotten is that the Cicero riot is only the most recent of a series in Cook County. The other riots have either not been publicized or have been reported like local fires. From July 1949 to August 1951, there were three such riots in Chicago, and there have been six altogether since 1945. In addition, since 1949 there have been more than a hundred lesser "incidents" in the Chicago area: bombings, fires, or organized assaults against Negro families, one of these by a hit-and-run incendiary who started a fire that cost ten lives. Another "incident" was the bombing of the home of Dr. Percy Julian, co-discoverer of cortisone, a few days after the Cicero riot.

A major outburst, in fact, occurred only a few days before the Cicero riot and it never broke into the headlines. It began toward evening on Sunday, July 1, when Leon Yonik, publisher of a local Lithuanian newspaper, gave shelter to three Negro delegates to the "American Peace Crusade," a Communist front organization then meeting in Chicago. A crowd gathered, the Negroes were spirited out the back door by policemen, a co-editor of the newspaper was slugged, and rock-throwing began. The windows in Yonik's house and the plateglass in his newspaper shop were shattered. The cops stood around the house three or four feet apart, ducking the missiles as the crowd cheered. Only a sergeant was in command. Next morning a false fire alarm was sounded and the mob rushed in with the hook and ladder. One of the men leaving the house, which was being "protected" by the police, was assaulted in their full view. When he visited the police station to sign a complaint, he was jailed. When arrested rioters came up for trial, policemen didn't show up as witnesses.

The Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination called the police action "a poor job of mob diagnosis, mob dispersal, force deployment."

IN November 1949, Aaron Bindman, a union organizer, invited some Negro labor representatives to his new home on Peoria Street. Quickly the rumor spread that Negroes had bought or rented the building. A crowd formed, but as usual only a small police detail was assigned. The first rock was thrown by a twelve-year-old boy and a general barrage followed. There were no policemen on the side of the street from which the stones were being thrown; as each stone sailed through the air, the crowd of about two hundred cheered. The next night the crowd gathered again and moved toward the house, crying, "Let's get them out," "Burn the house," "Communists," "Get the sheenies." Children cried, "Lynch 'em!" Other outbursts were aimed at the University of Chicago.

The small crowd could easily have been dispersed, but police sympathies were again with the mob. Soon gangs of young men organized, and the pattern was set for a more general outbreak. A few days later the crowds had increased to about two thousand, and gangs roamed the streets beating up Jews. Two University of Chicago students were set upon by the mob, beaten, and their car overturned. The men who came to the police station to bail out mob victims (arrested for fighting back!) were soundly pummeled in front of the station, while another student vainly begged the officers inside to help them. Another man, on whom the mob found a B'nai B'rith card, was mauled. Outsiders who visited the area were attacked because they were "strangers." One policeman told a Chicago *Daily News* reporter that he thought it was all right to beat up certain people "because they were Communists." "How do you know they were Communists?" the reporter asked. "Because they were Jews," answered the policeman.

Finally, Mayor Kennelly ordered his police to be more diligent in dispersing the crowds; after five days of rioting 200 policemen were sent into the area, some 70 persons were arrested, order was restored. Thirteen persons were reported injured and many others took their bruises quietly home.

Pressed by social agencies and warned that Jewish veterans might organize for reprisals, Mayor Kennelly said that thereafter there would be a new crowd-dispersal policy.

It would only be repetitive to recite the details of the other riots since 1945. One required 1,500 policemen to quell it.

The immediate cause of the flare-ups differs in each case, but the underlying cause is always the same: Negroes try to move out of their overcrowded slum areas and are met with violence, or the presence of an occasional Negro is interpreted as signaling an influx. Groups are permitted to gather around the target; they draw larger groups, including the subnormal, the prejudiced, the emotionally immature, and youth seeking "fun." Rumors begin to fly, emotion rises, order breaks down, and normally law-abiding citizens become part of the mob action. Frustrated by not being able to get at the target, the mob looks for a scapegoat upon which to vent its aggressions—Negroes, Jews, Communists, strangers, intellectuals. In all the outbreaks but one, police showed no willingness to protect the Negroes in their rights, and in some their forces were even deployed to let the victims take their beatings. The pattern is now a commonplace in Chicago, but the potential for miniature race wars exists in other parts of urban America.

THE migration of Negroes—and of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans—into the large American cities is due to the increasing need in our expanding economy for more unskilled and semi-skilled labor than presently exists in the urban labor pool. Opposition by "natives" to "newcomers" is nothing new in the American scene. The same Bohemian, Czech, and Polish groups that now resent Negroes moving into Cicero once sent earlier-established Americans into paroxysms of fear. Ultimately some pattern of equilibrium, or at least of "coexistence" between earlier and later comers was established. In some places the poorer classes lived right near their social and financial "betters" (much as Negroes did in the South); in other areas they followed the pattern of ear-

lier immigration centers like New York, and settled in voluntary ghettos, moving out as social assimilation occurred to mingle with other American groups or to establish new "ghettos." Starting in the 1920's, many new middle-class neighborhoods developed a policy of "exclusiveness," fencing themselves around with restrictions as to who might or might not live in them, and thereby intensified ghetto formations by those excluded. During this period more than a third of our present urban housing supply was erected.

In most of our industrial cities today, the Negroes constitute the latest "wave of immigration." But they are at a special disadvantage. They have come in large numbers, taxing the absorptive capacities of the cities they entered. Too underpaid to rent decent quarters and barred from getting shelter within their means, they have crowded in with others and suffer the ravages of tuberculosis and infant mortality at two and a half to three times the city averages. They have come in great waves and no sooner did one wave settle down, secure jobs, find homes, and establish communities, than another wave surged in, reopening old sores and renewing resentment. Though industry needed them and hired them, it was never interested in their housing problems. Nor was government concerned except through a small public housing program.

Yet while all these factors might have made the progress of adjustment more difficult, they need not have brought increasing violence. In fact, while tensions were increasing in housing, gains were being made in other areas through passage of fair employment practices laws, the abolition of segregation in the armed forces, the entry of Negroes into Southern universities—all without leading to violence.

The difference, however, may be accounted for by the fact that with regard to higher education in the South, employment in the North, and segregation in the armed forces, there were influential agencies (the Supreme Court, a few local officials, the military hierarchy) which provided the moral leadership for the advancement of equality. The influ-

ential agencies in housing temporized with, or supported, segregation and discrimination.

Indeed, a campaign of hostility and opposition to Negro mobility was allowed to get under way and intensify tension. It received its earliest rationalization from real-estate writers, developers, or boards, who since the 1920's have opposed heterogeneous living patterns and have contended that the scale of social desirability should be frozen in American neighborhoods. Some thought only Negroes should be segregated, some that "foreigners" also should be segregated, while a few believed in enforcing religious homogeneity as well.

THERE was of course no conscious "plot." But the real-estate and home-building group played an important role in supplying the intellectual justification for housing prejudice; they are a powerful lobby locally and in Washington, and, since the expansion of federal housing programs, were able to get at least one important housing agency to incorporate their ideas in its policy.

In the influential texts on real estate and housing written since the 1920's, one can find such items as:

(1) A listing of the order of racial "desirability," with the English, Germans, Scotch, Irish, and Scandinavians at the top, Jews, South Italians, Negroes, and Mexicans at the bottom.

(2) A statement by a former chief economist for the Federal Housing Administration to the effect that: "A family should never live in a neighborhood with those in a higher or lower income scale than its own."

(3) A warning to home owners, written by the "dean" of American appraisers, against "any deviation from the typical" in selecting tenants by race, color, nationality, income level, or social position.

(4) A declaration that: "The colored people certainly have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but they must recognize the economic disturbance which their presence in a white neighborhood causes and forego their desire to split off from the established districts where the rest of their

race lives. . . . Segregation of the Negro population seems to be the reasonable solution of the problem, no matter how unpleasant or objectionable the thought may be to colored residents."

(5) An assertion that all foreigners should be segregated and that only citizens who are "100 per cent American" are good for residential neighborhoods, which will become "anemic and even diseased if polluted with a large percentage of unassimilated aliens, who neither understand nor are in sympathy with American ideals and standards."

In a recent article in the *Appraisal Journal*, the chief appraiser for the liquidation operations of the General Services Administration asserts that real estate values are threatened, not only by Negroes, but by "people of foreign birth" and their children as well.

These and similar biases were written into the "Code of Ethics" of the National Association of Real Estate Boards and into the codes of local boards throughout the country. Thus, discrimination against minorities became a tenet of real estate "morality." It is true that the national code was modified somewhat last year, but the local codes still carry the old rule. As a result, American neighborhoods are at present being erected almost without exception as homogeneous units. The more races excluded, the more exclusive the area is considered.

WORSE still, federal government agencies have lent official sanction to bigotry in housing. When the official underwriters' manual of the Federal Housing Administration, the dominant influence in the house-building market since the mid-1930's, came to be written in 1935, prevalent real estate standards were made part of official government policy. This federal agency not only warned against mixing "inharmonious races or classes," but advocated racial restrictions, physical barriers, and racial covenants to keep the "undesirables" out, insisting on "homogeneity" before it would insure mortgages. In one section of the manual, proximity to pig-pens and to unwelcome races

were given equal weight as objections to the issuance of mortgages. FHA instructed its agents that one of their responsibilities was the "prevention of infiltration" by "inharmoonious racial groups" and "adverse influences." The stability of communities, it declared, depended upon occupancy by the "same social and racial classes to which they are accustomed." When the new federal urban redevelopment program was in preparation, two Chicago realtors, retained as consultants, specified in a confidential report that Jews be segregated as well as Negroes.

FHA thus operated to perpetuate the vicious circle that had been started in the 1920's: because new neighborhoods began to exclude the new immigrants they were forced to live under conditions of intolerable overcrowding, and they exerted the pressure of their numbers on the surrounding areas. And when a member of one of the excluded groups managed to get into one of the excluding neighborhoods, the original residents would fear being "inundated" or having the value of their property drop. But had they not erected dams in the first place, had they allowed the composition of the neighborhood to reach the natural proportions set by economic circumstances, the problem of "inundation" and declining property values might not have arisen.

The most fruitful approach to a solution of this problem today would be through new building that would serve as an escape valve for the population pressure of the segregated minorities. But neither Cook County, Illinois, which has enough lots to accommodate 4,000,000 families, nor Chicago, with enough lots to house 500,000 families, find themselves capable of building new homes for a fraction of the 100,000 Negro families that need them. The only hope for creating new unsegregated housing is a large-scale public housing program or a different FHA policy—but public housing has been held down to a trickle by claims that it means "Negro infiltration," and today almost all FHA developers build "for whites only." As for city officials, most won't even talk about the problem—it's too loaded with political dynamite.

Actually, in both Chicago and Detroit the very public housing program that would seem to offer some hope to minorities has been perverted into an instrument for ousting them from their present overcrowded homes. Under the pretext of "slum clearance," 50,000 Chicago Negroes face wholesale eviction. The city officials have obstinately refused to build on empty lots—this would let Negroes into white areas. So the net effect of "slum clearance" in the Chicago area is to reduce the number of housing units available to Negroes.

IN THE last few years, some progress has been made in breaking down segregation in a few cities. But neither the Supreme Court's ruling against the enforceability of restrictive covenants, nor FHA's decision two years ago to modify its manual, has been able to undo the damage already done throughout the country. A whole generation has been reared on the propaganda of "homogeneity," and "all-white, non-alien" neighborhoods exist from coast to coast. Many of them are still covered by restrictive covenants or substitute devices.

As things now stand, the effect of Negroes moving into new areas is that home-owners—educated by the real estate profession to believe that their houses will collapse in value if a single Negro moves nearby—offer their houses in panic and actually do bring down selling prices. Home-owners in other areas, seeing the decline of values through panic sales, form "neighborhood improvement" associations to keep the "intruders" out. More than a hundred such associations exist in Chicago and are a powerful force in the City Council. In Detroit these organizations have federated and become one of the most potent political organizations in the area. The ethical standards of business conduct in these cities have been neatly inverted and the inalienable right to buy and sell is now viewed as a conspiracy against the general welfare.

AN EDUCATED public opinion at the start might have halted the tide of prejudice and violence. But, both in Chicago and De-

troit, civic groups after the great riot of 1919 asked the newspapers to play down "racial news." They felt that sensational reporting by some of the papers might spread whatever violence occurred, give dangerous publicity to certain hate groups who had been capitalizing on the home-owners' fears of Negro "invasion," or rouse the Negroes to reprisal. Today it is argued that making a fuss about such incidents plays into the hands of Russian propaganda, which indeed it does. But the net result of the self-censorship of the press is that far more coverage is being given to these outbursts in the European and Asiatic press than in our own, so that they remain "secret" only from some Americans: three weeks after the Cicero riot, Governor Dewey was forced to apologize for Cicero to a Singapore audience that had read the story on the front pages of their press.

Meanwhile a vested political interest is built up in race prejudice; anti-Negro and anti-Semitic rabble-rousers flock in to supply an ideology; and unscrupulous politicians attempt to ride into power by appealing to race hatred. And while respectable newspapers are silent out of a feeling of responsibility, another section of the press has fanned anti-racial feeling with complete freedom. Thus in Chicago on June 9, 1947, the *Calumet Index*, an influential suburban newspaper, in an editorial headed "Protect Your Homes," wrote: "Every white neighborhood in the city and state will find itself defenseless against the wanton destruction of property value by a Negro minority intent upon forcing itself upon white neighbors." The *Index* then published a flood of letters of which the following by a policeman is typical:

"I'm in a position to know the Negro intimately, being a policeman. . . . They have you bluffed and get bolder as the years go by. . . . If we have to have a showdown with them to protect our homes and families, I'm in favor of it. . . . He'll back himself up with a knife or other deadly weapon. . . . I hope the whites some day soon will organize and stop this menace to our way of living."

Another letter dated June 16, 1947, began: "Sister, if you had heard your daughter or

your little granddaughter scream as I heard a little girl scream recently, who was receiving a treatment of your 'brotherhood of all men' from a Negro. . . ."

Shortly after this flood of letters, a major riot occurred in the Fernwood area.

This type of journalism is not exclusive to the *Calumet Index* or to Chicago. In Detroit, a string of suburban newspapers owned by Floyd McGriff champions the anti-Negro "civic associations," and keeps public temper at a high pitch by inveighing against "Reds," "Negroes," and "socialist housing." In Miami, a few weeks ago, the responsible *Miami Daily News* accepted a half-page ad announcing an "Indignation Meeting" to formulate plans for a "mammoth motorcade" to prevent "the infiltration of the colored race" into a private housing project abutting a Negro area. A dynamiting shortly thereafter caused \$200,000 in damage.

In the last Detroit mayoralty election, the backbone of Mayor Cobo's support was the "neighborhood improvement" associations, while his defeated opponent found himself linked with "Negroes and Communists." In nearby Dearborn, Orville L. Hubbard campaigned openly on the racial issue and was elected; Hubbard's boast was that he kept, and will keep, Negroes out of Dearborn.

IN SUM, Cicero is no isolated incident, I chargeable to local conditions or to some single criminal segment of the population; it is only the most prominent symptom of a major disease in the American scene. The jury that indicted the landlady, her lawyer, her agent, and the NAACP lawyer was not corrupt. Nor were the rioters all vandals or gangsters. They had the sanction of their elders, of the community, of the police, and of parts of the press. The police who tried to prevent the Negro family from moving in undoubtedly believed they were acting in the interests of their community. When the mayor and chief of police "couldn't be found," it was because they knew that if they stopped the riot they would lose any chances of re-election. The sheriff of Cook County was politically embarrassed when he

tried to enforce the law. Even the Governor who courageously called out the militia may have to pay a price in votes for his action. Is it not the plain fact that for the local community, segregation—and breaking the law to protect it—represents the prevailing morality, the “higher law”?

The recent decision by United States Attorney General McGrath to hold a federal grand jury investigation into the Cicero riot may be a beginning in the major effort required to tackle this problem. However, it is likely that the standards of any jury trying the culprits of Cook County will be no higher than that of the citizenry from which it is drawn.

What is called for is a full-scale drive to change both the conditions of segregation and the attitudes of prejudice that breed under these conditions and help sustain them.

THE first thing is to keep the Cicero pattern from spreading to other areas, and this requires review and action at the highest Washington level. If we are to meet our housing needs in the next twenty years, we shall have to build housing equal to half our existing supply. Most of this will be built with the help of FHA, the Housing and Home Finance Agency, or the Federal Home Loan Bank System. On the government itself therefore devolves the chief responsibility for deciding whether the future neighborhoods of America will be democratic communities hospitable to all classes and groups—or be like Cicero and Dearborn.

Furthermore, there must be a direct moral and educational attack at various levels on the social attitudes which support the “all-white” Ciceros throughout the country. For it is not only the residents of these communities themselves and their leaders who are at fault. The members of Chicago’s Union League club, who refused to admit Dr. Percy Julian to a luncheon of scientists, must share the blame for the moral climate of Cicero

and Chicago. So must Mayor Kennelly for failing to assert leadership in Chicago. So must the industrialists who recruit workers from minority groups but take no responsibility for seeing that they are housed. So too must the private builders who attach the free and pernicious label of “exclusive” as a means of selling their houses. And so too must FHA, until it bars federal mortgage insurance to builders who discriminate in favor of one race as against another.

Further, “slum clearance” must be stopped until there is an adequate supply of houses available for the displaced families. (It is obvious that the solution of America’s housing needs will not be satisfied by tearing down more houses occupied by minorities than are being built.) Simultaneously, a comprehensive program must be launched in which housing will be supplied on the basis of need, not race or color. The defense housing program can make a start in that direction, but a long-range program is needed as well.

Lastly, the creation of new non-segregated communities is itself an essential step in changing the attitudes which supply the fuel for race riots. In New York City, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Portland (Oregon) housing projects involving more than a billion dollars in investments have integrated Negroes and whites successfully. Negroes and whites live side by side in four hundred million dollars of public and private projects for middle-income families in New York City. Numerous studies have demonstrated that real estate values do not decline simply because Negroes or other minority groups move into an area.*

In short, the race problem in housing will not be resolved by pious preaching of civil rights by government or community leaders while the very environments that frustrate these rights are being created under their noses. Unless the issue is met by a full-scale program of building, by public education, and by the support of top-level officials, prejudice and political power will continue to move hand in hand to reinforce the pattern of racial lawlessness that is now a spreading blight upon the American scene.

*For a more extended discussion of this thesis, may I refer the reader to “The New ‘Gresham’s Law of Neighborhoods’—Fact or Fiction,” in *The Appraisal Journal*, July 1951, by the writer.

BEN GURION WINS AND LOSES AN ELECTION

Once More the Stop-Gap Coalition

HAL LEHRMAN

IT IS well known that not all Frenchmen have waxed mustaches, not all Englishmen wear monocles, and not all Italians are tenors. But it required the creation of an independent Jewish state, and three years of day-to-day evidence inside Israel, to demonstrate that not all Jews are skilled traders. Not, at any rate, Israeli Jews in politics. Although the electorate voted according to schedule at the end of July for a new parliament, the entire month of August went by without a government being distilled from the vote. September went by too, and still no cabinet. The politicians heading the parties available for any possible coalition appeared impotent to bargain each other into a working agreement. Despite public indignation, editorial outcry, and general amazement, they declined to draw upon what had long been conceived to be the traditional Jewish genius for compromise.

Many were those who demanded some settlement, any settlement, including this writer, who personally implored David Ben Gurion and the rival negotiators not to upset COMMENTARY's printing schedule for yet another month by further delay. Not even this grave consideration altered the resolution of all participants to stand firm. Only in the second week of October, about seventy days after the elections—probably a world's record for parliamentary paralysis—a government at last emerged.

ONE of the longest parliamentary crises in history has recently ended in the world's youngest parliamentary state. HAL LEHRMAN here describes the issues that were debated in the election campaign, the intricate maneuvers involved in the two-months' effort to establish an uneasy coalition cabinet, and offers some reflections on the strength and weaknesses of the new government in the face of Israel's critical economic and social problems. Mr. Lehrman's last series of articles on Israel in COMMENTARY, brought up to date and with new material added, is to be published shortly by William Sloane Associates under the title *Israel: The Beginning and Tomorrow*.

This government, to the Israeli people and to that part of the outside world which cared, seemed a suitable conclusion to a badly written farce. The new coalition brought together, in dubious isolation from all other parties, Laborite Mapai and elements of the old Religious Bloc—precisely those two groups whose falling out had been the ostensible reason for the elections in the first place! Even the most benevolent observer could not blink away the inference that, if this bizarre combination were to prevail, the election, its expense, its confusion, and some seven months of government vacuum had been a frivolous waste of time.

THE key to the riddle, of course, was the splinterism of the Israeli parliament. Like the French Assembly, the Knesset was a forest of fractions. The French parties, in the main (and apart from the Communists), proceed tangentially through shadings and nuances in a fairly logical flow from left to right. The Israeli parties, however, were sharply distinct, most of them based on totally different premises from one another and mutually contradictory. The only way to bring them into workable alignment was by compromise. And compromise was revealed in Jerusalem to be a scarce commodity.

In particular, neutral onlookers felt, compromise was most wanting in Mapai. Ben Gurion, government and Mapai chief, had failed to obtain an absolute majority. Only by sharing some of Mapai's effective power with the middle-class General Zionists, the second largest party created by the national choice, could he hope to construct a Western-oriented coalition tolerably immune from daily upset by petty factional intrigues. This sharing of the power was precisely what Ben Gurion seemed determined on no account to permit. The result was the October coalition of socialists and rabbis—a government of "Ma-peyes," some called it. Such a combine, even if it somehow survived, hardly represented the temper of the nation or the meaning of the election, and gave a bewildered

public the unpleasant impression that its collective leg was being pulled.

THE voters of Israel may have elected an "atomized," multi-party legislature alien to Anglo-Saxon taste—but nobody could complain that the campaign to capture their ballots had not been thoroughly "American" in tactics, color, ingenuity, and noise.

Some party campaign managers had actually gone to the United States and brought back a stuffed suitcase of American stunts and gadgets. Sound-trucks, brass bands, movies, film strips, radio broadcasts, leaflets, booklets, posters, newspaper ads, pennants, banners, soap-box oratory on street corners, lectures in rented halls, mass rallies in public squares—all competed for the voter's favor. Clouds of ticker-tape were showered on him. Live drawings were projected on the walls of buildings from artists' illuminated drawing boards to catch his eye. Neon signs on motor launches cruised offshore in the Mediterranean after dark or glared at him from rooftops. The only American noise-makers he was spared were the Election Day tin-horn and the stationary loudspeaker. The latter was banned by inter-party agreement (largely because of a shortage of storage batteries). Also by mutual consent, sound-trucks were mainly limited to announcement of slogans and party meetings as they rolled slowly through the streets.

At main squares and street intersections a "gentleman's agreement" allowed each soap-box speaker eight or ten minutes to make his point without interruption, after which rival spokesmen on different portions of the pavement received in their turn the courtesy of equal time for their counter-blasts. A tolerable attitude of live and let live prevailed in the matter of posters, too. Despite the scarcity of paper, tons of it appeared miraculously on walls and billboards. Each major party's electoral symbol—a letter of the Hebrew alphabet—blossomed on the sides of buildings and on special hoardings erected for the purpose by municipal authorities, with adequate space allocated to all factions. Mapai's *Aleph*, Mapam's *Mem*, the *Tsadeh* of the General Zionists and the *Chet* of the Herut wall-papered the cities and towns. In general, there was fair observance of a compact not to post over the other fellow's signs—though a certain number of small boys did find early-

morning employment with paste pots in the clandestine interests of one group or another. The parties also abided by a ban on paint—except for the Communists, who splashed their *Kuph* on the Yeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem and other unlikely places in a lurid red which no amount of later scrubbing could remove. The most refreshing juxtaposition of slogans occurred on a building in Tel Aviv's Mograbi Square: a General Zionist poster in neon declared that "The People Are for *Tsadeh!*"—"But They All Vote for *Aleph!*" said a Mapai rejoinder on the left; the *Tsadeh* and the *Aleph* together spelled out the word "*tseh*," which means "go away" or "beat it" in Hebrew.

There were five separate workers' parties in the campaign (moderate socialist, left-wing socialist, Communist, and two religious labor groups), three bourgeois parties (right-wing nationalist, middle-of-the-road, and pro-socialist), three Arab parties, two Orthodox parties, one faction for the Yemenites, one for the "Sephardi and Oriental Communities," one for the "Union of Sephardi and Ashkenzai," and still another for "New Immigrants and Ex-Soldiers." With these seventeen groups competing, it was to be expected that the variety of their appeals would be rich, agitated, and often beside the point.

The paid political ads which filled most of the leading dailies during the last weeks of the campaign were a jumbled index to the diversified elements which sought representation in the Knesset. "Jews from Iraq," a two-column box cried, "don't be misled! There is a candidate for you. Vote for S. B. Sassoon. Vote for *Samech-Tsadeh*." A Mapai ad, harking back to the days of the British Mandate, urged votes for itself because the General Zionists had allegedly opposed the purchase of arms. The General Zionists, reciprocating the irrelevance by publishing photographs of Abba Hillel Silver, Emanuel Neumann, and Benjamin Browdy, solicited support for their ticket in order to gratify American Jewry and "pave the way for better relations" with the World Zionist movement. The cold war was joined by those who recalled that the USSR had failed to give Israel a loan and those who saw in the American loan a sell-out of Israel's soul for dollars. The Communists broke out in a poem in the Walt Whitman manner hailing the beauties of nature and of a party which was

credited with the "liberation" of a billion people. Advocacy of equal rights for women was hailed as a triumph for modernism or denounced as a desecration of Holy Writ. Ultra-patriots called for a crossing of the Jordan and seizure of Arab Jerusalem, while full-blooded athletes deplored Mapai's alleged interference in Maccabi sports. There were fervent entreaties on behalf of kosher food for the army, a fallow seventh year for all agricultural land, more female Yemenite clerks in government jobs, and exemption from direct taxes for all breadwinners with more than five children.

But in this jungle of factions and causes there were only two full-grown lions, snarling and clawing over one main bone of contention. The chief issue of the campaign was the economic crisis; the chief rivals were the hitherto dominant moderate-socialist Mapai and the up-and-coming middle-class General Zionists. Of the other parties, ten were so insignificant in their following or specialized in their outlook that they made hardly a scratch. The rest were groups which had figured prominently in the turbulence of the early independence period and might again bulk large in some future crisis; but this time, for lack of funds to match the pace in a high-pressure, American-style campaign, and for lack of precise identification in the issues that the great majority of the voters considered most immediate, they receded into relative obscurity.

The Religious Bloc, whose political religiosity had made such a stir abroad and been the proximate cause of the first Knesset's dissolution, never quite recovered from its own subsequent dismemberment into separate splinters. In the 1949 general elections, five religious parties had campaigned as a single—and consequently ponderable—combine. But now they had relapsed into splintered fractions. In particular, Agudat Israel, Mizrahi, and their doctrinally similar but ideologically contrary "labor" counterparts in Poale Agudat Israel and Hapoel Hamizrachi, could not agree on their relative shares of seats in a joint parliamentary list. Each filed its own list of candidates. Ironically, they finally resolved their differences on the last day for registration of parties, only to reach the elections-committee office too late. Despite appeals to the Knesset, the single

list was rejected and the Bloc remained broken.

Thus divided, the voice of the religious groups failed by far to approach the volume of the previous alliance. Only Hapoel Hamizrachi managed to make itself well heard—but, significantly, it used only a minor pedal on the religious issue, devoting at least as much attention to such non-theological matters as freedom of speech, good municipal government, courtesy in the civil service, and fair wages and hours. On the other hand, Mapai craftily blunted some of the rabbinical thunderbolts by assuring all that religion "must play a vital part in the life of the nation." The result was that, for most of the voters, Torah simply did not enter the debate.

Mapam, the second strongest group in the previous Knesset, took meager part in the campaign, staging only one full-blown mass rally reminiscent of its old-time Marxist showmanship. Internally split by controversy over the exact degree of affiliation with the Cominform, Mapam lacked the élan for a unified electoral effort. It relied largely on its "iron reserve" of voters in the left-wing *kibbutzim*, which were so solid for Mapam that other parties could not even get inside the confines of the settlements to electioneer. Moreover, Mapam seemed aware that the convolutions of its pro-Zionist but pro-Soviet dogma were too complicated to be explained to the bewildered and politically uninstructed *olim* (immigrants) in the work settlement camps. But the party did campaign vigorously against, of all people, the Communists—presumably to emphasize its own "independence" and keep some of the rank and file from slipping over to the out-and-out Stalinist party. Mapam lost no occasion to justify its previous rejection of formal alliance with "Communist provocateurs, sectarians, and anti-Zionist agents" in the Cominform; it assured its followers that the "deep gulf" separating Mapam from Communism was imperative because of the latter's opposition to all constructive Zionist effort. The Communists, in turn, repaid these compliments by addressing the chief Mapamnicks as Trotskyists, Titoists, fascists, and saboteurs of Israeli independence.

In addition, the Communists concentrated on the Arabs, whose voting strength had approximately tripled since 1949. In the vil-

lages, where the *sheikh* or *effendi* still ruled, the Arab vote was likely to go according to the preference of the headman. But among the Arab workers in Nazareth and elsewhere the Communists labored diligently, with good prospect of success. They counted on the normal resentments against an austerity government. They calculated that they would also profit from special Arab resentments against the existing restrictions on Arabs in the military zones. Most of all, they knew that a certain type of Arab would be particularly attracted toward their party because—on the strength of its stand for Arab “independence”—it was the only one in Israel for which he could vote without compromising himself as a “pro-Jewish collaborator” in the event of ultimate Arab “liberation.”

IN THE middle-class camp, the so-called Progressive party, which had split off from the General Zionists and gone with Mapai in the previous government, labored under the classic difficulties of any group which is neither fish, poultry, nor good red meat. On the one hand it was compelled to justify its bourgeois cooperation with socialism by plaintive appeals for national unity against class war. On the other hand it had to induce votes specifically for itself by lashing out against both its middle-class opponents and its leftist allies. Thus on one day the Progressives would echo Mapai and berate the General Zionists for right-wing plutocracy; on the next the Progressives would sound exactly like the General Zionists in denouncing the iniquities of Mapai.

Far over on the right stood Herut, political heir of the terrorist Irgun underground army—still opposed to the Jewish Agency in its new Mapai vestments, still beating the drum for muscular patriotism, and more and more removed from the homelier issues of the little-bread-and-less-butter era. Herut's finest hour had been the hour of national struggle against the British and the Arabs. In the first Knesset its group had consisted mainly of young bloods, without the seasoning of older, steadier men (whom the party had available) who might have helped create public confidence in Herut as an element for sober peacetime construction. The party in parliament was deficient in the specifics of an economic program, belaboring

Histadrut monopolies and private “semi-monopolists” with equal vigor, and promising abundance and glory as its alternative. But it did not campaign too hard. It sensed, somehow, that—at least for the moment—the electorate was not listening.

The truth indeed was that the time had gone by for exhortations to adventure. In 1949 the voters had opted not so much for platforms and programs as for history. Exhilarated by the miracle of independence, they had voted for heroes, leaders, and past victories rather than for solutions of present and future dilemmas. This time, however, the same electors came to the ballot box with sobriety—and with a heavy consciousness that hard decisions were urgent. Most of all, a decision on economics.

POLITICAL economy is an esoteric domain whose complexities and nuances conspire against the layman and against easy public understanding. Slogans and panaceas often substitute for analysis. As in elections everywhere else, the 1951 campaign in Israel was hardly conducted like a graduate seminar. The arguments before the voters were simplified and generally misleading. In this, Mapai and the General Zionists sinned alike.

On the most rudimentary level of its propaganda, Mapai averred that it had the Man—David Ben Gurion—and the Achievement: the State of Israel and all its works. Ben Gurion had believed in and proclaimed the state when “many faint hearts were fearful.” He had designed the army, dispersed the dissidents, directed the battles, destroyed the foe. He, his ministers, and his serried ranks in Mapai had also conquered the soil, filled the land with people, met and overcome every hazard of sovereignty both home and abroad. With bland immodesty, the party published charts and pictographs illustrating the growth in population, immigration, employment, colonization, kilowatt hours, land under cultivation, housing, pupils, teachers, schools—claiming all the credit. (The most telling reply to this was an opposition poster which calculated the number of babies born since the state's creation, the marriages, divorces, traffic accidents, man-hours spent in ration queues, rise in living costs—adding after each statistic: “Hurrah for Mapai!”) If reelected, Mapai promised, it

would continue giving the country the "leadership and initiative" which had made these towering accomplishments possible.

Elect the General Zionists, warned Mapai in effect, and goodbye Israel! The General Zionists—every last one of them, it appeared—were black-marketeers, snobs, exploiters of labor, enemies of Zion. Once in power, they would cut wages, boost prices, flood the country with useless luxury goods and mass unemployment, starve the poor, fatten the rich. Immigration would be throttled, national defense and security paralyzed, sound economic controls replaced by a dog-eat-dog fight for inflationary profits, sober development of the economy and the land frustrated and ignored. The choice, according to Mapai, was between "luxuries for the few and necessities for all."

Nothing loath to reciprocate, the General Zionists tossed every crime in the book back at Mapai, from planned anarchy to totalitarianism. Mapai, it seemed, had precipitated the government crisis over religious education only to steam-roller a new election which would give it absolute power. No, it already had absolute power—in the civil service, police, foreign service, army, economy. Down with Mapai dictatorship, screamed the posters—from bulletin boards which would obviously not have been available if a dictatorship really existed. Down also with Mapai economics, which was not planning but a lack of planning. Take the current ice shortage: because Mapai brain-trusters had withheld a few paltry thousand dollars in foreign exchange for new equipment, all Israel was standing in the broiling summer sun waiting for melted chunks of ice. "Ice skating" (*eislaufen*—or running after ice) had become the new Israeli summer sport, taunted the General Zionists. They promised the ice queues: vote Mapai, and next year you'll be lining up for water too!

Mapai criticisms of General Zionism were all refuted as "base slanders." The proof was that only a few months earlier, Mapai had desperately tried to lure these same malevolent General Zionists into the coalition government. But, said the General Zionists, our price was the loosening of the Mapai grip on jobs, social services, economy, and education—which the Mapainiks would never permit until the people ejected them. And Mapai boasts of having built the coun-

try single-handed! What about private enterprise?—It had developed 45 per cent of Israel's mixed farming, 65 per cent of the building, 75 per cent of the citrus, 85 per cent of the commerce, finance, and industry, 90 per cent of the handicrafts. All this had been done by individual initiative—and still more could be done if only Mapai and Histadrut and all their minions were sent packing. Elect us, said the General Zionists, and there will be no more queues, no more rationing, but freedom and plenty for all.

ACTUALLY, of course, the General Zionists knew it would be impossible to abolish rationing on the day after victory, and Mapai knew the General Zionists had no intention of trying it. The economic problem was more complicated than that. It was quite insoluble, in fact, under present circumstances. It would remain insoluble as long as immigrants kept pouring into Israel at a rate faster than the entry of capital to put those immigrants to productive work. Until the balance was restored, there would be shortages, and rationing, and queues—and no election promises could do away with them. Nobody dared suggest, however, that the immigration be slowed. Such a suggestion would be unwise politically, however wise it might be economically. Failing that, the problem became one of mitigating the inevitable crisis, not eliminating it. And on this there was a legitimate disagreement between the rival parties, not over objectives but over method and approach.

Behind the mutual recrimination, both factions agreed that the crux of the dilemma was increased capital and increased production. This required planning and controls. But what kind and how much? The General Zionists maintained that Mapai was handicapped by ignorance of practical economics, dearth of efficient personnel, and crippling prejudice against the one thing which could reduce the awful gap between large demand and small supply: private investment. The Mapainiks, their opponents said, made a fetish of controls, administered them poorly and unfairly, and made it impossible for foreign capital to come to the rescue. The General Zionists knew that no miracles would come overnight if they took over instead. But they proposed at least to make a start by freshening the atmosphere

and giving private initiative more room to operate.

Concretely, they intended to remove restrictions on foreign exchange sufficiently to encourage the entry of new investment without requiring the newcomers to pay high premiums or submit to government intervention at every step in the production and distribution process. They did not explain how they would prevent private initiative from running away with itself, but they were confident that in a healthy, optimistic market a natural and equitable level would be found for prices. They also proposed to increase productivity and normalize consumer supply. Here again they were vague on how these were to be achieved; but they were at least sure that to decree lower prices while increasing money in circulation and failing to provide adequate goods on which to spend the money, as Mapai was doing, was to ensure inflation.

Mapai, on the other hand, emphasized not so much the attracting of private investment at all costs but the attracting of private investment without allowing it to raid the state's reserves of foreign exchange. Ben Gurion and his friends earnestly wanted private capital, and went to extraordinary lengths to get it through the sale of Israeli bonds in America. They knew that their own policies had been unable to prevent a roaring black market. But they were, after all, socialists—if not entirely in program, at least in ideology, training, and instinct. They had a deep-rooted distrust of capitalism, and an acute awareness of capitalism's potential for taking over if they ever let it get big enough. They did not wish to jeopardize a system of controls which, despite its shortcomings, had been able to maintain employment and a tolerable ration at least of bread. (Nor did they wish, either, to jeopardize their own position in an economy dominated by the cooperative sector where their political power resided.)

So they proposed to continue a control on new investment. Ben Gurion was ready to promise investigation of complaints of discrimination in favor of the cooperatives. He would take measures to eliminate red tape, party privilege, and inefficiency in the bureaucracy—a need which Mapai had indignantly denied before the campaign. But he was not prepared drastically to relax the

regimen of austerity. The “ingathering of the exiles” would continue at a rate which would give Israel a population of two millions in four years, and this required continued and larger sacrifices by the people of Israel.

TO PUT this program through, Ben Gurion sought an absolute majority in Parliament. It had been no secret that he was weary of coalition cabinets dependent on small parliamentary groups which demanded special consideration as the fee for their contribution to government equilibrium. Toward the close of the campaign he came out flatly for full Mapai control. Broadcasting to the nation on the last Saturday before the election, he asked for a “stable and loyal majority government.” Next day, in a widely published “Letter to the Voter,” he made it even clearer: “I call on every citizen . . . to assure us a decisive majority, that we may . . . attain, without interruption and without wrangling, all the objectives during the four years to come. . . .”

Where was this majority to be obtained? In the 1949 elections Mapai had received 35.7 per cent of the total vote. It might now draw some support from the right wing of Mapam, among those dissatisfied with the latter party's eternal oppositionism and Kremlinizing tactics. Scattered votes might also be picked up from the declining Progressives and disunited religious parties. But it was a long haul from 35.7 per cent to 50.1 per cent. The floating vote in Israel was too small to bridge such a gap. It was quite evident that Ben Gurion was looking to the *new* electors—more than 300,000 of them—who had been added by mass immigration to the 500,000 eligible in 1949. In particular, it was said, he counted on the *olim* from North Africa, the Middle East, and the Yemen.

No politician could be found in Israel with sufficient courage to suggest publicly that these newcomers ought perhaps not to have been given the franchise so hastily. Yet there were few who tried privately to defend it. The elections law allowed everyone a vote who had been in the country by March 31, 1951. This meant that four months' residence in Israel was legally sufficient. Nowhere else on earth did such a brief sojourn entitle an individual to have a

voice in affairs of a state. Moreover, it was patently absurd to imagine that more than an infinitesimal minority of the new immigrants had become sufficiently familiar with the problems of the country and the issues of the campaign to make a measured decision, let alone to be allowed the opportunity, through their sheer numbers, drastically to revise the judgment of the old settlement.

A catalogue of stories, some of them apocryphal but all of them true in essence, were told during the campaign to illustrate the primitiveness of the new mass vote. Most characteristic perhaps was one about the Moroccan who listened incredulously to an anti-Mapai orator and then declared: "This man is foolish. He tells us Ben Gurion will go away if I drop a piece of paper into a wooden box. Why should Ben Gurion care about me and my paper? The only way to get rid of somebody is to stick a knife in him." In one *ma'abara* (transit camp), where socialists organized a May Day celebration, Yemenites marched in the procession carrying aloft a Sefer Torah. Curiously, only the Hapoel Hamizrachi, of all the religious parties, made a sizable electioneering effort among the immigrants—although the entire political rabbinate in the months preceding the campaign had apparently been relying on the piety of these same immigrants for votes. It was the non-religious Mapai, thanks to Ben Gurion the messiah, that seemed slated to derive the major political benefits from the newcomers' religious fervor.

In the eyes of the simple *olim* the Prime Minister was the unique creator of the miracle which had transported them to Eretz Israel. For them he was vested in robes of imperial, if not semi-divine, majesty. His tours of the camps—the *ma'abarot*—resembled messianic processions. Sick children were offered up to him for healing. Zealots struggled to touch his person and clothing. To the high indignation of his opponents, Ben Gurion hardly put himself out to evade this nimbus of sanctity. On occasion he would even neglect to mention the name of his own party in *ma'abarot* election speeches, thus inferentially making his appeal an exclusively personal one. Mapai, it was charged, not only tolerated but furthered the mumbo-jumbo in its stage-managing of the *ma'abarot* visitations.

Allegations were also widespread that the predominantly Mapai officialdom of the camp staffs were coaching their charges on how to vote for Mapai, threatening them with loss of jobs and their place in line for permanent housing if they failed to support the party—and even arranging last-minute improvements in the living conditions of some more dismal immigrant centers in order to induce a grateful turnout at the polls. The General Zionists printed ads advising the *olim* not to be intimidated: "The elections are secret!" Whatever the prejudice and exaggeration in these charges (Mapai countered that the General Zionists were "buying" votes by sending food into the *ma'abarot*) two facts seemed clear: many of the immigrants had not yet been emancipated from the legacy of fear which had been bred into them in their countries of origin; and most would cast their vote, not as a reasoned choice among programs and platforms, but as repayment to a particular party for real or imagined benefactions.

AS MIGHT have been expected, the most colorful aspect of Election Day itself was provided by the Oriental *olim* and the Arabs. Though many of the latter were "veterans" of the 1949 voting, they still participated in wonder and half-disbelief—especially the women, performing a ritual of freedom which would have been unthinkable three brief years earlier after timeless centuries as degraded conveniences of their husbands and masters. Some of the women came open-faced and exuberant—but there also were motionless lines of women wrapped in dense black veils and shapeless black robes from head to toe. Such costume not being conducive to easy identification of voters, it required frequent intervention at the polling places by venerable elders, who granted themselves special dispensation to lift a veil in the more doubtful cases.

The scenes in the *ma'abarot* were even more bizarre, with immigrants in twenty or more varieties of Oriental dress gesticulating and exchanging advice in the thick throngs outside each voting station. In a *ma'abara* for 15,000 Yemenites at Rosh Ha-ayin near Petah Tikva, I saw a row of *olim* each holding the "Aleph" voting slip of Mapai securely in hand. Several who had already balloted said they had voted for "the Jewish

party." A European member of the local election committee, representing Hapoel Hamizrachi, told me that some were less interested in voting than in just getting proof on their identity cards that they had done so—out of vague uneasiness that they would be punished if they did not. I heard one woman—in baggy Yemenite trousers and with five small children in tow though she could scarcely have been twenty-one—protesting angrily because she was not allowed to stuff three slips of one party into the ballot box. A gnarled oldster in skullcap and green pajamas clutched the slips of all seventeen parties in his brown fist. He wanted to vote for each at the same time because, as he told me through two interpreters—from Arabic into Hebrew into Yiddish—"they have all been good to me."

However irrational the spectacle, there was something impressive, even inspiring, in the procession of these liberated peoples to the polls. Apart from trivial incidents, the momentous day went by without disorder as 695,000 out of an estimated 880,000 eligible voters—nearly 80 per cent—registered their mandate at some 1,700 voting stations. The crazy-quilt design of the electorate only highlighted the revolution which Israel's emergence had exploded in the center of the slumbering Middle East. The like of this democratic performance had no counterpart in the Arab world, past or present. Characteristic were the displays, on tables at discreet distances from the entry to many polling places, of propaganda leaflets and booklets in Bulgarian, Yiddish, Hungarian, French, Italian, Ladino, Serb, Polish, and other languages. In Sakiya, the polling officials came from Latvia, Morocco, Poland, Tunisia, and Italy. Two years earlier these men had been scattered over the map, alien and incomprehensible to one another; now they sat around one table, conversing amicably in ungrammatical but voluble Hebrew and conducting a singular experiment in democracy.

IF ONE takes into account the complete lack of precedent, a Central Elections Committee headed by Supreme Court Justice Itzhak Olshan managed the nationwide poll with notable proficiency. This group had not only to receive and tabulate the results, but had been responsible in the earlier weeks for the proper distribution throughout the

country of pencils, string, voting slips, ballot boxes, rubber stamps, and other rudimentary equipment—itself an impressive achievement in logistics. In every station the voter, after being checked off against his photograph and identity book from the registration list, retired behind a screen to select one party's slip from seventeen bundles of slips before him and seal it in an opaque envelope which he dropped into the ballot box on the local election committee's table. His identity book was then perforated and stamped "Voted for the Second Knesset," a precaution against double voting. After the polls closed between 11 P.M. and 1 A.M., each committee—composed of five or six different party representatives—tallied the results and phoned them to one of twenty regional offices, which in turn relayed them to national headquarters in Tel Aviv.

By 11 P.M. the next day the results were tallied: the nation had given the socialist Mapai 37.3 per cent—1.6 per cent more than in 1949—confirming it as the outstanding party in the country. But the middle-class General Zionists, receiving 16.1 instead of their previous 5.2 per cent, had soared from fifth to second place.

As is usual in such statistical situations, nearly everyone claimed victory. The Communists, who had improved from a paltry 3.6 to a negligible 4 per cent, preened themselves almost as much as if they had won a majority. Mapam, which had receded from 14.8 to 12.5 per cent, found comfort in the fact that the "workers' parties"—including Mapam's staunchest enemies in Mapai and the religious labor groups—had amassed a combined total of 62.1 per cent. The Arabs were delighted that they had increased their Knesset seats from three to eight—though split 5-to-3 between Mapai and the Communists. The nationalist Herut, which had dwindled from 11.5 to 6.6 per cent, congratulated itself on having done so well despite the country's preoccupation with economic issues. The total percentage of the religious parties had declined from 12.2 to 11.8 per cent, but Hapoel Hamizrachi was gratified to emerge unmistakably as the strongest party in the camp of the devout.

Most enlightening (and confusing) of all were the mutually exclusive (but equally correct) conclusions of the two major contenders. The General Zionists noted that

the middle class had demonstrated a clear tendency away from splinter bourgeois groups toward concentration around a General Zionist core. They reminded Mapai that the latter had been able to hold and slightly enlarge the ground won in 1949 only thanks to the predominantly Ben Gurion vote in the politically illiterate immigrant centers—and they underscored Mapai's dismal failure to capture a majority. In exchange Mapai stressed the indisputable fact that despite austerity and sacrifice the country had reaffirmed a larger faith in Mapai than in any other party. In addition, said Mapai, both major aspects of the Ben Gurion program had been vindicated in the popular referendum: over 60 per cent of the votes had gone to the labor parties which backed Mapai's domestic policy of economic controls—and more than 70 per cent had gone to the pro-Western parties (including the General Zionists!) which backed Mapai's foreign policy. Therefore, it was soberly argued, Mapai had obviously won the elections hands down.

But such Jesuitical calculations were merely preliminary smoke-screens laid down to cover the maneuvers of bluff and counter-bluff in advance of the one important decision still to be made: the composition of the next coalition government.

ON AUGUST 15 President Weizmann summoned Ben Gurion to begin negotiating with the other parties to form a new government. In the incoming parliament Mapai had 45 seats instead of 48, the religious parties 15 instead of 16, the Progressives 4 instead of 5. It would have seemed absurd at that point to imagine that the Prime Minister would seek to resurrect the old coalition with these elements. He might however aim for a "little cabinet" of the moderate left-of-center parties: Mapai, Progressives, the two religious labor groups. But this would net him only 59 votes, two short of a majority, and make him dependent on the support—or passive abstention—of the five pro-Mapai Arabs! It would also expose him to the caprice of his coalition allies, any fraction of whom could overthrow him at will. Or would he rather link Mapai with the 22 seats of the General Zionists and Sephardi, thereby establishing a clean majority of 67? Or would he perhaps even seek somehow to

win over all or part of Mapam's 15 votes?

Ben Gurion tried each combination. His agility in maneuver, according to all beholders, was sheer artistry. Unfortunately, the performance lacked one essential: a willingness to accept the logical consequence of any alliance, either with right, left, or center, by making a basic adjustment in his own policy. As a result, he ended with even less than he had at the outset.

The Prime Minister's initial gambit was to call for a government of national union, excluding only the Communists and his old Irgun foes of Herut. Mapam must come in, he was described as feeling, because only a solid union of the workers' parties could effectively enlist the workers of the nation in the sacrifices needed for economic stabilization. He declined to modify his foreign policy, but he offered to abandon the principle of collective cabinet responsibility and permit Mapam, if inside the government, to vote against the government on external matters. By this offer he hoped, at worst, to seduce away a Zionist wing of Mapam from the party's Marxist core. But Mapam remained united, demanded abandonment of Mapai's pro-Western policy, and eventually broke off the discussions.

There were not many mourners at the demise of the Mapai-Mapam conferences. Indeed, great relief was noted among those who had feared the effect of Mapam's presence on Israeli ability to obtain precious American aid. The same circles, however, for converse reasons would have welcomed a Mapai union with the General Zionists. The latter's participation, they felt, would have given significant assurance not only to the West in general but in particular to the foreign Jewish and other capital investment which Israel so manifestly needed.

Nor illogically, the General Zionists required some tangible concessions to their point of view. Conversations with Mapai covered a wide area, including abolition of political jurisdiction in education, employment agencies, and social security. On most of these a degree of resilience could be detected in both camps. The real obstacle was economics. The General Zionists were reluctantly willing to let Mapai retain the king-pin post of finance. But they asked, as

an irreducible minimum, for a trade portfolio which would give them some authority in matters of supply, rationing, and controls. Otherwise, they contended, they would merely be puppet partners, with full responsibility (and blame) for a Mapai system of economy. It was by attacking this system that they had risen from fifth to second place. The composition of the new government would have to reflect this fact—but the Prime Minister would not budge on the question of economic control. In a style reminiscent of Churchill, he advised this writer in an interview in Jerusalem just before negotiations with the General Zionists broke down, that he had not become Prime Minister to preside at the dissolution of Histadrut. "If the General Zionists hope to liquidate Histadrut, Solel Boneh, Hamashbir Hamerkazi," he said, "they will be disappointed." He interpreted the combined vote of Mapai, the religious labor groups, Mapam, and the Communists as crushing proof that a majority of the nation was satisfied with the dominance which labor had achieved in the economy. Giving such priority importance to the defense of labor monopoly, he regarded any real sharing of economic authority with the "capitalist" General Zionists as a mortal danger.

Thus it came about that Ben Gurion was left only with the pathetic religious alliance. It is correct to say Ben Gurion, rather than Mapai, because the Prime Minister had been the unchallenged impresario of Mapai's tortuous movements throughout the weeks of Byzantine bargaining. It is also correct to call the religious alliance pathetic because it resembled the traditional mouse emerging from the well-known mountain. It produced a government based on 60 seats out of 120. It did not even include the bourgeois Progressives, who had hitherto tried

wistfully inside the government to serve as bridge between labor and the middle class; the Progressive defection was itself an eloquent testimony that Ben Gurion this time had really overreached himself. Finally, the renewed marriage with Orthodoxy exposed Mapai again to the same religious pressures which Ben Gurion once had regarded as blackmail—with the singular difference that now there were four religious politicians in the government where before there had only been three.

IN QUARTERS holding Ben Gurion in deep respect as an uncannily subtle manipulator, it was said that he was more aware than anyone of the impossible bargain he had made, that he knew he would have to come to terms ultimately with the General Zionists, but that he first had to convince his rank and file of this, by demonstrating that a coalition with the Orthodox or others simply would not endure; otherwise, the unprepared workers who formed Mapai's bedrock might cry "betrayal" and flock to Mapam, the arch enemy. Perhaps. What was undeniably sure, in any case, was that the Mapai-religious coalition was only a stopgap. It stood in constant peril of dissolution. It might conceivably be an indefinitely long-lived stopgap—but quite obviously its existence and prolongation would solve nothing. Moreover, it was not understood by the people, already frayed to the breaking-point by austerity. They were irritated by the incessant palaver, shocked by the manifest inability of the politicians to make a statesmanlike settlement. Sooner or later, the impasse between entrenched labor and its critics would have to be generously resolved if there was to be unity in the nation, stability in Israel's government, and harmonious development in Israel's economy.

BRITISH INTELLECTUALS IN THE WELFARE STATE

How the New Climate Affects Science and Culture

STEPHEN SPENDER

IT IS well to remember that the intellectual life of a country such as Britain is a whole composed of many parts. Someone like myself tends to judge the position of British intellectuals by that of the creative writers. Yet my one evening's visit to the Festival of Britain—which was, among other things, the outstanding intellectual event of 1951 in England—made clear to me that scientists, architects, musicians, and artists, even more than the writers, form today our intellectual life. And it goes without saying that the intellectual life itself takes its character from the larger social framework. There has been a transformation in the whole, and the result is a general displacement of every part. Some parts have benefited, others have suffered. The social changes that affect the writer also affect the doctor, though differently.

All these changes in England tend to be attributed to socialism, yet perhaps one of the most important things to grasp is that socialism has little to do with it. Britain has been living under a state of emergency, and it is really the emergency which has decided everything. A great deal of the legislation that is attributed to socialism was already de-

STEPHEN SPENDER reports here on the intellectual and cultural climate of England against a background of economic crisis and political uncertainty. How does the writer, and his colleagues in the various arts and sciences, fare in the Welfare State? The latest of Mr. Spender's numerous books, *World Within World*, an autobiographical volume, was published in this country earlier this year. His other books include *The Destructive Element*, *Forward from Liberalism*, *European Witness*, and several volumes of poetry. Mr. Spender was born in 1909 and attended University College, Oxford. His most recent contribution to COMMENTARY, aside from book reviews, was in the symposium "The Jewish Writer and the English Literary Tradition," in the September 1949 issue.

cided by the National Government of the war years. I doubt whether a different government—I write before the election—although it may arouse a good many passions, can really alter anything, so long as Britain continues to exist within an ever extending economic crisis.

Politicians can of course continue to fight about unreal issues, but the lack of alternatives, of a choice of action apart from just a choice between parties with different names, is one of the profoundest causes of unease in England today. A healthy body can choose; an unhealthy one has to take the medicines prescribed for it. Although Churchill at the one extreme, or Bevan at the other, might make a fearful *gaffe* and deliver a too light or too heavy dose, it is felt that on the whole they wouldn't, and that whatever government comes into power will do much the same things.

This lack of a real choice, in the way that there was once a profound difference of principle between left and right, has not destroyed politics, but it has taken the intellectual inspiration from politics: the intellectual no longer feels that society is a material which can be shaped into the image of a social idea that inspires him. Politics supplies less and less the matter for the intellectual's creative thought, but more clearly than ever it determines the situation in which he must operate, and while the excitement of regarding politics as a field for the exercise of a moral free will has disappeared, the bitterness of political conflicts has rather increased. Extremists who are not in power advocate unreal alternatives (like the cry of some conservatives for a "strong hand" in Persia, or the *New Statesman* and *Nation's* advocacy of a line independent of the United States) with a violence exacerbated by their sense of impotence.

THERE is a good deal of disagreement among the intellectuals as to the ultimate nature of the present crisis. I belong to a committee consisting of a few scientists, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, and writers, and one question that constantly comes up is whether there has been a decline in the values of our society. Some members of the committee approach these discussions on the assumption that things are tremendously wrong, and that we live in an era of apocalyptic disaster. The sociologists do not deny the existence of a crisis, but they deny strenuously that things are worse than they have frequently been before. They point out that the standard of living of the English workers is higher than it has ever been, that we are creating a society in which everyone is cared for, and that if we are threatened by seemingly overwhelming dangers, so have most societies been through all but the latter half of the 19th century, when "the West" felt comparatively secure.

The scientists, represented by the brilliant J. B. Bronowsky, author of a book on William Blake and now a research worker on the Coal Board, are not over-gloomy either, though they do not have the opaque optimism of the official Laborite intellectuals. I suppose that if you are a scientist today, all sorts of possibilities are open to you which are not revealed to other people. If you know, for example, that in the slag and waste of coal pits which no one has felt worth mining or which have been abandoned, there are gases which when they are tapped will provide more fuel power than all the coal in the mines that are used—if you know this and many other such facts, then the statistics about production which so discourage non-scientists only exist as a problem to be resolved by new discoveries. For the contemporary scientist the solution of poverty may lie in the exploitable energy of a grain of sand. So the attitude of many British scientists (exemplified above all by J. D. Bernal) is that, given the opportunity, they could transform the material conditions of English life. Hence, also, the temptation of some scientists to fall for Communism, which

seems to offer them the fullest power to work for the community.

ONE basic fact outweighs all others as a determinant of the intellectual life and the lives of intellectuals.

Britain is a country in circumstances terribly reduced by two wars. Its foreign investments were sold between 1939 and 1945, and its middle classes are almost ruined. A mild socialist revolution took place in 1945, and the policy which has been followed is the inevitable one of rationing goods and distributing benefits as evenly as possible. So the problem for the individual is how to fit himself into a society where individualism as such has strictly limited means and rewards. This hits everyone. If the writers complain, so do the thousands of young people—mostly workers—who emigrate to Canada each year because they find England to be a country where there is no opening for their "initiative."

Anyone living in England and frequenting the society of the people who are generally thought of as the "intellectuals"—namely the writers—is struck by their gloom. It is difficult to attach this depression to any particular spokesmen, for an intellectual depression can scarcely be said to have leaders; though George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (he is said to have given it this title because no one would have taken him seriously if he had called it *Nineteen Forty-eight*) blows like a posthumous breath of bitter disillusionment over the English literary scene.

The disappearance of Cyril Connolly's *Horizon* and of John Lehmann's *New Writing* (not to mention half a dozen other reviews) is symptomatic. Here, too, one is confronted by the complexity of the Intellectual Depression. Connolly's farewell editorial placed most of the blame for *Horizon's* demise on the public and his fellow writers. The fact is that *Horizon* could have carried on; it gave up the ghost in a fit which was a mixture of fatigue and pique. *New Writing* fell to the lack of interest of the publishers. In neither case can the public or the writers really be blamed. The circumstances which

have led to the disappearance of review after review can really perhaps be best summed up under the one word "tiredness."

It is remarkable that in literature, on the whole, the right has survived far better than the left. The writers who are still actively producing are T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Elizabeth Bowen—all writers of the right or center who never mixed in the left movement of the 30's. The mood of despondency is in fact decidedly a crisis of the left, and there are several reasons, personal and public, why this should be so.

The most important of these brings me back to the absence of political choice in England today. The leftist intellectuals, after their political representatives achieved power, experienced far more disillusionment than those of the right, who were able to take up the position of representing a nobler order of things than the decade dominated by Necessity which was called Socialism. The rightists could wash their hands of the political situation. The intellectuals of the left could not do so, but were forced either to indulge in the kind of carping criticism of their own party and government that characterizes the *New Statesman*, or else to attempt to enjoy the ascetic medicine with which socialism provided them.

At this point, the left-wing intellectuals were faced with a problem that no socialist writer in England had hitherto experienced: namely, the unpleasantness of having to live in a collectivized society. Here again the rightists were in a much stronger position, for they had never asked for such a society; although its advent did not make them happy, the spirit in which they accepted it did not become a problem of conscience to them.

One has to look back a bit to understand the discomfiture of the English leftist writers. England has a long tradition of writers who have preached socialism, including Ruskin, William Morris, Bernard Shaw, and H. G. Wells. It is perhaps only a coincidence that these were all men with a considerable passion for the goods of the world. To some ex-

tent this passion gave them bad consciences; but it is easier for a socialist writer to reconcile his conscience to having money than to accept with good grace its being taken away. In a socialist society, it was felt, everyone would have what he needed, and the extraordinary talents of a Wells or a Shaw would probably be rewarded even more than they were in the bourgeois society. (Shaw, who preached egalitarianism for everyone else, wanted to be a millionaire, showed extraordinary resistance to taxation when it hit him personally, and was made miserable in his old age by an obsessive idea that the government was ruining him; indeed, perhaps Shaw was a Communist rather than a socialist because he realized that the Communists were far more likely than the socialists to leave him his fortune.) British socialism does not work like this. And the writers are a particularly hard-hit section of society, because they are scarcely recognized as deserving the tax-free expense accounts which ease the life of a businessman. It is crude to say so, but I am convinced that the absence of hard cash is one of the reasons for the disillusionment of the writers with socialism. Here again the rightists score: having never asked for egalitarianism, they do not have bad consciences when they find that they resent it.

THE intellectuals are drawn into the emergency organization of British life either because it needs them or because it is felt that they need it. Thus, on the one hand, there are the scientists employed by the government for atomic research or on the Coal Board; on the other, there are artists who are given Arts Council grants. The scientist is fulfilling a function of immediate necessity, the artist is a secondary kind of necessity—entertainment, if not charity.

For an architect, there is practically no scope for domestic building, since houses in the Welfare State are strictly utilitarian. There is, however, within the very restricted means allowed, a great deal of planning. Part of the zest of the buildings for the Festival was due to their being a kind of architect's holiday; Ralph Tubbs (who designed

the Dome of Discovery) and a few others were at last allowed to do what they wanted with their gifts, and they were not cramped by the usual restrictions.

For painters, the private purchaser has almost disappeared and their most sought-after market now exists in the committees of the Arts Council who choose paintings for exhibitions. These committees have maintained a remarkably high standard of judgment. All the same, they can hardly be supposed to have the passionate taste which is that of the private collector. They are likely to choose works that seem most characteristic of a particular artist or of a phase of his development—"representative" works. One distinguished painter who has had many works chosen remarked to me that in the course of several years the committee has nearly always chosen what he considered his "average" paintings and almost never his best ones.

Music has probably benefited more than any other art from this organization of intellectual life, for music has existed for a concert public for two hundred years now, anyway. Yet here one notices a disadvantage in the organization of the arts: the boosting of everything English. In both painting and music there seems to have been an unconscious conspiracy resulting from the reaction of artists themselves against foreign influences and the efforts of cultural organizations to boost their wares. Instead of importing Picasso and Stravinsky, we now export Henry Moore ("the world's greatest sculptor") and Benjamin Britten. Perhaps these two very distinguished artists do not suffer from being told that they are the greatest of their kind that the world has to show, but there is no doubt that a maddening complacency with British artistic products has settled down on the younger English painters and composers.

BENEATH the personal problems of writers who are heavily taxed in a society where the book trade is already hard hit by economic shortages, there lurk much deeper problems. In modern society the writer has been a comparatively privileged person, a kind of professional amateur, a man whose

work is created out of a life which—compared with other lives—is one long holiday. The anarchist and socialist writers who scorned the bourgeoisie were its spoiled children, highly paid to deliver their insults. The freedom of England was, more than in any other country in the world, the freedom of the middle classes; and whatever his political views, no writer who could afford not to do so chose to live in a working-class environment. The workers in the plays of Bernard Shaw or the novels of H. G. Wells are just as much buffoons as the clowns in Shakespeare; and if they rise above buffoonery, it is because they move into the revolutionary section of the middle class.

English individualism itself is essentially a middle-class affair, and with the decline of the middle classes that individualism appears to be threatened. To all intents and purposes there is no working-class or peasant culture in England. Nothing illustrates this better than the life of D. H. Lawrence, the one great proletarian writer of this century who, as distinct from those middle-class writers who practiced a theoretical socialism, really sprang from the people. The key to Lawrence's philosophy is an absolute hatred for the ugliness of the mining villages near Nottingham, where he was born. Lawrence retained throughout his life a sympathy for the miners, as people—they are the gamekeepers and workers who seduce his titled ladies. But what he could not stomach was the environment from which these people arose; the seduction of a Lady Chatterley by a gamekeeper symbolized the rejection by the individual worker of his past surroundings. Lawrence retained a worker's contempt for the bourgeois, but more than anything he hated the idea of the proletarianization of England, which he regarded as a kind of diabolic possession in which the last stage would be worse than the first.

The English leftist writers wanted socialism for other people, and imagined themselves existing independently as artists within a socialist society. If socialism was their philosophy for others, the closer and more intimate philosophy according to which they

lived had, as its two main components, the sanctity of personal relationships and a small independent income. These goals seemed so modest that they did not imagine them to conflict with a socialist society. "Two Cheers for Democracy," the title of an essay by E. M. Forster, expresses their attitude towards society, and *A Room of One's Own*, by Virginia Woolf (with its variant, combining Forster and Virginia Woolf: "A Womb with a View," by Cyril Connolly) expressed their inmost faith. If Marxism was the text of their social creed, their private philosophy was expressed by G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, with its insistence on the supreme values of aesthetic experience and personal relationships. Even on the left, the best talents of the century have been perfectionist and personal in the first place and social and cooperative only in the second place.

And always there was the belief that the individualist position could be reconciled with the socialist one, that the masses would be brought up to the level of the intellectuals, not the intellectuals confined within the life of the masses. Nor, in fact, have the individualists been proletarianized, although a general leveling down of the rich and the improvement of the conditions of living of the poor has led to a kind of flooding of the towns by rather joyless-looking workers in search of pleasure. The intellectuals have been officialized rather than proletarianized, seeking their livings on the BBC or in the British Council or some other kind of official work.

THE idea that individualism could and must be fused with socialism seems to me the right one, and yet in England today, among the writers, it seems to have very little weight. It is the kind of "liberal" solution which people reject all too easily nowadays. The younger writers have reacted away from social thinking altogether into a personalism or a neo-romanticism which echoes Keats's boast that he had never written a line tainted with public thought. The very abstract anarchism of Herbert Read seems to attract a good many, and the fiercely anti-American

anarchist-pacifism of the brilliant writer and physician Alex Comfort is an extreme form of a kind of political thinking that rejects existing political realities altogether. In a recently published letter in the *New Statesman*, Alex Comfort declares that "since 1940 the policies in which we are involved have become, almost imperceptibly unless one was watching for the change, policies whose entire real motivation is unconscious." According to him, America's attitude to Russia can only be explained in terms of "psycho-pathology, not politics." This does not mean, however, that he favors Russia, which he regards also as being, though to perhaps a lesser degree, a prey of "unconscious forces." Dr. Comfort wishes Britain to dissociate itself from the "mental patients playing upon the endemic neurosis of a sick nation" who are the framers of American policy. I suspect that a good many of the younger intellectuals would agree with his diagnosis, or at all events with his bitter attitude towards public policy, though they would probably not follow him to his conclusions, which would seem to them too directly "political."

All this sounds bad, but it may signify little more than that intellectuals who had put too much trust in social philosophies are now either withdrawing from them, or trying to take up some new position. The mistake of the left has been always to put too much faith in systems—which, however good and just they may be, remain after all external *things*—and not to emphasize sufficiently the importance of an interior life that is independent of things. A mechanically good society like the Welfare State does not make people morally self-sufficient. Indeed, it may have the result that those people who have advocated it without leading lives that can ever more than indirectly contribute to it are at a loss when it is accomplished. Before socialism came into being, the moral purpose of their lives was to promote it; but when it has been established they are left without a *raison d'être*: and that is what has happened to many of the English leftist writers.

Despite the fact that some of the older

writers in England are at the height of their powers, one has the impression that literature is going through a period which is a kind of gap. Intellectually and morally the older writers are living on their capital. The younger ones can hardly draw on the patrimony of the Sitwells, or on T. S. Eliot's sense of a continuous tradition. One has the impression of a dearth of young talent, and the personalism, apocalypticism, neo-romanticism, etc., of the younger poets has come to very little or nothing. The poets whom it is most possible to respect are those like Vernon Watkins and Norman Nicholson who have withdrawn to the country and who produce admittedly minor work reminiscent of the Georgian poets, but with a strength of technique learned during the past thirty years.

If England were any other country, one would say that what we are waiting for is a talent that would express the emergent confidence of the working class with the same strength as the early Wells expressed the point of view of the self-educated little man half a century ago. If such a writer were to arise one would expect him to come from Scotland or Wales—at all events from some area where there were the remnants of a local tradition. But the culture of England is so persistently middle-class that it is difficult to imagine any such writer not being absorbed into this group. After all, given luck, what is most likely to happen in England is that the children of the workers of today will be absorbed into the middle class, just as the political leaders, and the D. H. Lawrences and the Dylan Thomases, have been. A new middle-class England strengthened by the blood of the workers will eventually arise, I believe. But it will take thirty years.

A COMPLETE picture of English intellectual life today would, I think, be inconclu-

sive, but its main features would be something as follows: the social planners, with their heads buried in the sand of astronomical statistics, well and happy, thank you; the scientists, troubled by a sense of social responsibility awakened in them by the atom bomb, renouncing the 19th-century attitude that science means complete detachment from everything but the facts, but enthusiastically responding to the challenge to produce miracles that would solve seemingly overwhelming material problems; the philosophers, occupied in an amusing analysis of language which has the result of destroying the whole basis of metaphysical thought and at the same time making the construction of any future philosophy logically impossible; the writers divided into several groups: (a) the older writers reincarnating the glories of a past civilization; (b) the leftist writers finding the social problem solved by the perpetual improvisations of a Necessity needing no assistance from them; (c) the young writers, able neither to draw on the capital of the old ones nor to adopt the worn attitudes of the leftist ones, absorbed in a desperate search for a personal attitude towards events threatening to destroy human personality.

Serious literature might seem *de trop* in the Welfare State (or the State of Necessity), did not there hover over us in the threatening atmosphere a warning whose presence is the one thing the older writers, the leftist writers, and the younger writers are all aware of. This is the nemesis predicted in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, where men are completely dominated by the needs of a society perpetually dividing and subdividing into warring groups, or in the idea expressed in Wells's strange last book, *Mind at the End of Its Tether*: that the whole purpose of progressive movements has failed, and that something strange has happened in the world which makes events no longer predictable.

IS JEWISH HUMOR DEAD?

The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Joke

IRVING KRISTOL

IT IS known that the surest way of killing a joke is to explain it, and humor has, in self-defense, made an especially comic figure of the man who would earnestly analyze it. Thus humor and seriousness contest the field, with all arbitration or appeasement ruled out, and with the possibility of rising above the battle simply unimaginable; one rises above the battle either through seriousness or humor—and then one is right back in the fight. It is an unequal struggle: humor is more aggressive, more mobile, and has the more penetrating weapons. But in the end, humor loses and seriousness wins. Humorists die and dead men tell no jokes, and this, it must be admitted, is a serious matter.

Jewish humor died with its humorists when the Nazis killed off the Jews of Eastern Europe, though it seems likely that even without the intervention of Hitler this humor would not long have survived the disintegration of the ghetto community from which it drew its inspiration. This opinion is certain to be challenged, especially by those who, though willing to concede that persecution can wound the flesh, are reluctant to believe that it can murder the spirit or that the spirit can, by the erosion of time, simply wither and die. They will ask: does not this humor still flourish in the Jewish communities of America and Israel? is not Jewish humor a treasure in the perpetual custody of the Jewish people? The answer to both questions is, I think, no, and in the course of

THERE are few subjects about which people are more solemn—and disputatious—than Jewish humor. Perhaps, as IRVING KRISTOL here suggests, that is because Jewish humor at its best can be a serious matter. Mr. Kristol is managing editor of COMMENTARY. His most recent article, "Einstein: The Passion of Pure Reason," appeared in the September 1950 issue.

this essay I hope to show why. But first I would like to illustrate the defeat of humor with an anecdote that some will find amusing but that is really not a Jewish joke so much as the dying echo of one.

A GROUP of Jewish refugees from Poland, recently arrived in the United States, visited one evening with their American-born relatives. One of the latter thought to lighten the conversation by telling an old Jewish joke:

A Jew in czarist Russia wished to buy a ticket that would permit him to enter the platform of a railroad station, and he was referred to a vending machine where such tickets were sold at ten kopecks each. The Jew eyed the machine curiously and mused, "Maybe you'll take five kopecks?" He inserted five kopecks and pressed the lever. No ticket came out. The Jew shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well, there was no harm in trying." He inserted another five kopecks, and pulled the lever. Nothing happened. As he stood there, bewildered, a Cossack brushed past him, inserted ten kopecks into the machine, pulled the lever, and got his ticket. The Jew flew into a rage, spat at the machine, and yelled: "Filthy anti-Semite! For a Cossack you give tickets, but for a Jew's ten kopecks you don't bother!"

To the narrator's pleasure, the newcomers laughed heartily at the joke though it is but an inferior specimen of the familiar genre of Jewish humor that pokes fun at the Jews for their propensity to gloss over their own shortcomings and blame the always available anti-Semite for their misfortunes.

Some weeks later there was another family gathering, this time to welcome some still newer arrivals from the DP camps. One of the refugees who had been present at the earlier meeting volunteered to tell the "very

funny joke" that the *Amerikaner* had related. He told it as follows:

A Jew in czarist Russia wished to buy a ticket that would permit him to enter the platform of a railroad station, and he was referred to a vending machine where such tickets were sold at ten kopecks each. The Jew inserted his ten kopecks, but nothing happened. As he stood there, bewildered, a Cossack brushed past him, inserted ten kopecks into the machine, pulled the lever, and got his ticket. The Jew flew into a rage, spat at the machine, and yelled: "Filthy anti-Semite! For a Cossack you give tickets, but for a Jew's ten kopecks you don't bother!"

The laughter was every bit as hearty at this version of the joke, though the original point had been blunted and what had been a joke had really become a parable. Actually, these Jews from Poland were not laughing at any joke at all, but only at the way the story summarized their sense of a senseless persecution. The seriousness of the concentration camps had conquered.

It is true that in my telling of this incident the original point has been in part regained, for the butts of my story are Jews so sensitive to anti-Semitism that they have lost the detachment that is at the root of true humor. But it is a point that barely reaches the mark, and whatever smile it arouses is the mere shadow of a shadow. Too many corpses obstruct the comic perspective.

ONE recent anthologist of Jewish humor, doubtless expressing the sentiments of many, sees in the Jewish joke a victory gained by the Jewish spirit over centuries of adversity, an exultant defiance of persecution and harassment, an affirmation of the will to survival in the face of an ever impending doom. It would surely be to the glory of the entire human race, and of the Jews in particular, if this were the case. And it is agreeable to note that there is some truth in this description. But not the whole truth.

Though the records are scanty, it seems safe to assert that the kind of humor we know came late to Jewish history, gaining ground in the 17th and 18th centuries and reaching

its apogee in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It is, then, a preeminently *modern* phenomenon. The Jews of an earlier day were rich in proverbs (some of them witty), parables, moralistic anecdotes—but not, it seems, in humor. This fact is no occasion for surprise if we cast a glance at the development of humor in the various Western Christian nations of the Middle Ages. There we see that humor could exist only in the interstices of a religious civilization (just as the Purim parodies existed within orthodox Judaism), that the religious authorities frowned upon it, and that it won popular affection to the extent that the dominion of religion became questionable, and that, indeed, one of its functions was to challenge this dominion. Humor needs to breathe the air of skepticism, and prior to the modern epoch the Jews were men of faith, piety, and hence sobriety. When one believes that this life on earth is implicated in eternal salvation or eternal damnation, there is little motive for levity.

Take, for example, the matter of *Galgenhumor* (gallows humor), which was elevated to such a fine art in the writings of the man who gaily signed himself Sholom Aleichem. Here is how Sholom Aleichem has one of his characters, Yisrolik of Kishenev, write to his friend Yankel in America after the Kishenev pogrom of 1903 (I use the version given by Maurice Samuel in his fine book, *The World of Sholom Aleichem*):

"Dear Yankel: You ask me to write at length, and I'd like to oblige, but there's really nothing to write about. The rich are still rich and the poor are dying of hunger, as they always do. What's new about that? And as far as the pogroms are concerned, thank God we have nothing more to fear, as we've already had ours—two of them, in fact, and a third wouldn't be worth while. . . . All our family got through it safely, except for Lippi, who was killed with his two sons, Noah and Mordecai; first-class artisans, all three of them. Oh yes, and except Hersht. Perel was found dead in the cellar together with the baby at her breast. But as Getzi used to say: 'It might have been worse; don't think of the better, because there's no limit

to that.' You ask about Heshel. He's been out of work now for over half a year. The fact is they won't let him work in prison. . . . Mendel did a clever thing; he up and died. Some say of hunger, others of consumption. Personally, I think he died of both. I really don't know what else there is to write about, except the cholera, which is going great guns. . . ."

This is Sholom Aleichem at his best, which means that it is at the top rung of the world's literature of irony. Yet it is most improbable that a pious Jew who had, say, undergone the expulsion from Spain in 1492 would have found this letter as entertaining as did his descendants, or that he would have found it as "cathartic" as his own Cabalistic speculations. For him, death at the hands of persecutors was *kiddush ha-shem*, the sanctification of the Name. It was an affair in the realm of the sacred, and jesting was unthinkable. But for Sholom Aleichem death in a pogrom was a somewhat more ambiguous event. It might be *kiddush ha-shem*—Sholom Aleichem nowhere states that it is not. Or it might be nothing but bad luck ornamented with a high-sounding title. In this equivocation between the sacred and the profane, the eternal and the finite, the spark of humor is fanned.

It is interesting to note that fifty Jews were killed in the Kishenev pogrom and that the civilized world was shocked and horrified. Sholom Aleichem's irony was a harmonic counterpoint to this shock and horror. But when some six million Jews were slaughtered during World War II, the world was numbed by the enormity of the crime, and the victims themselves could not respond with the aesthetic freedom of Sholom Aleichem. The kinds of jokes that Jews brought forth from the concentration camps were mainly bitter thrusts at the idiocy of their oppressors. For just as humor cannot mature in a life of utter religious faith, so it cannot survive a life of sheer nihilism.

NO PRANKS, no slapstick, no practical jokes—nothing that reduces the spiritual and human to the mechanical. It is a humor of the spirit, not against the spirit.

What we call Jewish humor is Yiddish humor. It is the humor that was conceived and expressed in the Yiddish language, in a secular language of the market place that had as part of its everyday idiom a multitude of Hebrew phrases having to do with modes of Talmudic exegesis or with such non-secular affairs as the world-to-come, the after-life, and reincarnation; a language full of the chanting and inflections that accompanied the translation of holy texts and their memorization: a "knowing language," in Maurice Samuel's phrase, full of internal hints and esoteric references. It is the humor of a folk community of garrulous intellectuals and hair-splitters cut off from nature and animal life, intrigued only by the oddities of the human and the divine, taking as its frame of reference the complex structure of ghetto society, ghetto life, and Jewish tradition. It is, supremely, the humor of an intelligence running amok in the household of the gods without ever daring, or wanting, to set foot outside the open door.

Many of the specific jokes, of course, were borrowed from other peoples and other tongues, and have since been reclaimed with interest. Others have survived the long voyage to America or Israel and translation into English or modern Hebrew. But, with the wiping out of the Yiddish-speaking communities, the creative source of this humor is gone. To the extent that old habits and folkways persist among Jews in America, Europe, and Israel—especially insofar as they involve the family and the hazards of earning a living—slices of Yiddish humor will be appreciated (mother-in-law jokes, marriage-broker jokes, *luftmentsh* jokes). However, it is clear that a good part of the pleasure these jokes provide results from the warm nostalgia of merely hearing them. The old folkways are disappearing and Yiddish itself is on its way to becoming a dead language. The Jews of Israel prefer not to think of the ghetto, and their humor seems to be content with variations on Viennese café wit. (Example: Ben Gurion offers a friend the post of minister of colonies. "But we have no colonies," the friend protests. "So what?" replies Ben

Gurion. "Isn't Kaplan minister of finance?") American Jews are not so pressed to forget the ghetto, and Yiddish humor has for them a sentimental as well as comic value. But, though parts of the body have been preserved, even adorned and dressed as new, the soul is gone. The Jewish joke is no longer *important*. We are no longer in that world, and of that epoch, where the greatest of all Jewish writers was—one can even say, had to be—a humorist.

The "Jewish situation" that brought forth a humor unique in man's history has altered. What was that situation?

STATED briefly, the situation was one of God-forsaken religiosity. And the humor of this situation is a humor of pious blasphemy, in which the religious emotion is siphoned off into explosive wit.

In one of Sholom Aleichem's stories, Tevye the dairyman, riding home hungry after a day's work, with one ruble in his pocket with which to sustain his nagging wife and seven thriving daughters, addresses God as follows:

"Thou hast made us a little lower than the angels. It depends upon what you call a little, isn't it? Lord, what is life, and what are we, and to what may a man be likened? A man may be likened to a carpenter; for a carpenter lives, and lives and lives, and finally dies. And so does a man."

The form of this speech is that of an edifying rabbinic discourse. The content is impudent and sophistical. But—and this is what is most significant—Sholom Aleichem is loyal at one and the same time to both the form and the content that controverts it. The Jews in their ages of faith had experienced the contradictions of life and the cosmos as revelation, as theophany; now they are only contradictions, existing side by side with a faith that cannot comprehend them.

The conflict between form and content can be seen in innumerable jokes, of which the following is a rather good representative:

If I have the right to take money out of my pocket, from which the other man has no right to take money, then is not my right all

the greater to take money from *his* pocket, from which even he has the right to take money?

This "joke" is chanted in the melody usually reserved for Talmudic study, and the parody is further stressed by the fact that in the original Yiddish the two clauses are joined by the technical Hebrew phrase, *kal v'chomer*, which is the Talmudic counterpart to the logician's *a fortiori*. Indeed, the form is impeccably orthodox; only the content negates the purpose of this form, which in the Talmud aims at establishing the immutable principles of justice and piety. But though the form is negated it is not denied, for the jokester—assuming him to have been an average ghetto Jew—had no intention of substituting other and novel laws of thought: these laws were as good as any, it just happened that reality made an absurdity of them, and that was what was funny.

Ernst Simon has shown how the method of argument in the Talmud, and the sing-song incantation of the unpunctuated text, lent itself to the uses of humor.* But before such use could be made, a measure of detachment had to be gained; the mind had to be able to stand apart from the sacred text, and to see itself as standing apart. The affective power of faith had to be stilled, replaced by what Bergson has called "a momentary anesthesia of the heart," and the world given over to pure intelligence. The life of faith is then seen as something absurd.

But, after that, Jewish humor takes another, a bold, step: the world of non-faith, of pure intelligence, is seen to be equally absurd.

JEWISH humor is the humor of a rebellious rationalism. It is also the *reductio ad absurdum* of rationalism. Thus there is produced a distinctive quality of Jewish wit: its circularity.

Immanuel Olsvanger has recorded three versions—Arabic, Russian, and Jewish—of the same joke, which purports to reveal the "secret of Telegraphy":

*In his article "Notes on Jewish Wit," in the *Jewish Frontier*, October 1948.

Arabic—"Imagine a huge dog having its head in Beirut and its tail in Damascus. Pull the dog's tail in Damascus and the bark will be heard in Beirut."

Russian—First Russian: "Imagine a horse, its head in Moscow and its tail in Tula. Pinch the horse's nose in Moscow and it will wag its tail in Tula. And so it is with telegraphy." Second Russian: "Yes, but how do they telegraph from Tula to Moscow?"

Jewish—First Jew: "Imagine, instead of the wire, a dog, whose head is in Kovno and whose tail is in Vilna. Pull the tail in Vilna and the bark will be heard in Kovno." Second Jew: "But how does wireless telegraphy work?" First Jew: "The very same way but without the dog."

Here, rational explanation ends up by being identical with the original confession of ignorance, yet is offered as a proof. Now this circularity is partly a sardonic and sophisticated mimicry of the naive circularity that is intrinsic to religious faith and that, for instance, permits the pious commentator to prove that Abraham wore a hat when he invited the angels into his tent—for would the patriarch Abraham *not* wear a hat? In the 19th century this mimicry was directed in particular against the "wonder-working" rabbis of Hasidism, as in the following:

Rabbi A., in Cracow, while praying, saw in a vision that Rabbi B., in Lemberg, had just died. He and his congregation went into mourning. Later, travelers from Lemberg reported that Rabbi B. was still alive and in good health. The critics of Rabbi A. took this opportunity to scoff at his supposed supernatural powers. To these the disciples of Rabbi A. retorted: "And isn't it miracle enough for you that our rabbi could see all the way from Cracow to Lemberg?"*

But if the reasoning of the devout is absurd, it is not ridiculous, for there is always one bit of evidence that makes sense out of the nonsense of faith: the pious man, who by his presence converts what is rationally absurd into something real. One must bear

in mind to what extent the fullness of Jewish life was, for almost two millennia, devoted to what is rationally absurd, to what extent it was a dream-life, a sane type of madness. Jewish existence was grounded in a series of fantastic "make-believes." The Jews, seemingly the lowliest of the low, were God's chosen people. The Temple was destroyed but the routine of sacrifice was studied. On the last day of the Feast of Booths all Jews prayed for rain so that the non-existent crops of Palestine's non-existent Jewish settlements might prosper.

And here the Jewish joker is in a dilemma. He is the child of a later age, and he believes that what is rationally absurd should be really absurd. He is, however, also close enough to the vitality of Jewish faith to be profoundly aware that the absurd can, through faith, become real. He *knows*, uncontrollably, and in every fiber of his being, that the Jew is the son of the covenant, even if such an idea is an outrage to enlightened intelligence. He becomes the victim of an exhilarating paranoia. Truth and reality diverge: what is true is rational, but what is real is the absurd. His reason finds itself impotent, and in the circular joke it proceeds to outwit itself.

A JEW, whose life had been one long trial and who was sustained only by the hope of compensation in the after-life, lay dying. With his remaining breath he told his children, assembled round his bed, how he had suffered and with what joy he looked forward to the world-to-come. "But," he concluded, "what a joke it would be if there were nothing over there!"

The joke comes about if one ardently believes in a God who does not—and one secretly fears it—exist.

Jewish humor dances along a knife-edge that separates religious faith from sheer nihilism. It "knows" that the material world is the only true reality, but it also finds that this world makes no sense in its own terms and is impossible to live in, while the absurd world of Jewish faith, the one into which it was born and whose air it is accustomed to

*This is taken from Freud's *Wit in Its Relation to the Unconscious*, which is still one of the best books on Jewish humor ever written.

breathe, is no longer true. The intensity of Jewish humor derives from this double loyalty to incompatibles, to the sacred and the profane. Bergson has said that "a situation is invariably comic when it belongs simultaneously to two altogether independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time." So it is that the European Jew, achieving self-consciousness in the Enlightenment, found himself at the point of intersection of faith and reason, in a comic situation he could only master with a joke.

Jewish humor is, consequently, also nostalgic. It looks backward to a state where the Jew did not know the comic, was incapable of wit, and did not need humor to make him laugh. Occasionally, its nostalgia is so acute

that, as Theodor Reik has demonstrated, Jewish humor, especially in its self-aggression, strongly resembles psychopathic melancholia.

What is this but to say that Jewish humor is of the essence of modernity? Sholom Aleichem is a truly modern writer in the same sense that Dostoevsky and Nietzsche are modern writers. He has eaten of the fruit of the tree of rational knowledge but he hungers for the fruit of the tree of religious life. And Sholom Aleichem's true heir is Franz Kafka, who used to laugh until the tears came to his eyes when he read his work aloud to friends. But Kafka doesn't make *us* laugh. That is a measure of the extent to which the modern situation, dissolving into murderous nihilism, robs Jewish humor of its victory.

NIGHTHAWKS

SAMUEL YELLEN

After the painting by Edward Hopper

THE place is the corner of Empty and Bleak,
The time is night's most desolate hour,
The scene is Al's Coffee Cup or the Hamburger
Tower,
The persons in this drama do not speak.

We who peer through that curve of plate glass
Count three nighthawks seated there—patrons
of life:

The counterman will be with you in a jiff,
The thick white mugs were never meant
for demitasse.

The single man whose hunched back we see
Once put a gun to his head in Russian Bank,
Whirled the chamber, pulled the trigger, drew
a blank,

And now lives out his *x* years' guarantee.

And facing us, the two central characters
Have finished their coffee, and have lit
A contemplative cigarette;
His hand lies close, but not touching hers.

Not long ago together in a darkened room,
Mouth burned mouth, flesh beat
and ground

On ravaged flesh, and yet they found
No local habitation and no name.

Oh, are we not lucky to be none of these!
We can look on with complacent eye:
Our satisfactions satisfy,
Our pleasures, our pleasures please.

SAMUEL YELLEN, associate professor of English at Indiana University, has published poems and stories in various magazines. His last contribution to COMMENTARY was "The Statisdemon" (July 1950). A book of his poems will be brought out early next year by the Indiana University Press.

FRANCO: PROUD RULER OF A HUNGRY PEOPLE

A Report from Spain

PETER SCHMID

I FOUND it no easy matter to gain admittance to the reception at which the Italian Ambassador was to present his credentials. Franco is one of the most inaccessible men in contemporary Europe, and even the privileged journalists to whom he grants interviews are mostly loud speakers blaring forth official pronouncements on such matters as Christianity and Gibraltar.

Actually, I could not have brought it off without the intervention of an *amigo*. In Spain everything is difficult, but not impossible—provided one possesses such a sponsor. It must not be thought that the broad range of implication of *amigo* is echoed in our conception of “friend”; there is something rather more soulful about our word, smacking as it does of spiritual community. All this need not figure in an *amigo*. It is enough to ring someone and say: “Mr. So-and-so sends you his best regards,” and from the other end of the line you hear: “*Encantado, encantado!*” From that moment, the answering voice calls itself your *amigo*, and every new acquaintance it brings you into contact with also becomes your *amigo* straightaway, so that *amigos* spring up with bewildering rapidity. The only catch—and it is enough to make the

OF ALL current political issues, that of the Western democracies’ relations with Spain is one of the most thorny and disputed. Is Spain, in its own way, as totalitarian as Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia? How good a “risk” is Franco for the West? This candid first-hand report by PETER SCHMID conveys an appreciation of the complexities involved in trying to reach an answer to such questions. Mr. Schmid is a Swiss journalist, literary critic, and inveterate globe-trotter. His article “Indonesia Sips the Wine of Independence” appeared in the June 1951 issue of COMMENTARY. The present article has been translated from German by Felix Giovanelli.

MADRID

many other Europeans who live here despair—is the fact that contacts with Spaniards seldom amount to more than fugitive relationships. Those subcutaneous bonds without which there can be no real community are almost entirely lacking here. Spain is a nation of twenty-eight million hermits united with one another according to formula. In any consideration of Spanish politics, one must keep in mind the artificiality of all forms of social organization.

With an *amigo*, provided he has the necessary contacts, everything is possible. My *amigo* was the *amigo* of the Master of the Palace. Therefore, while the mounted Moorish guard ambled up with the ancient Bourbon *calèche*, I was able, at close range, to observe the Caudillo as he prepared himself for the reception of the Ambassador. Surrounded by glittering gold braid, leaning on his sword, he stood: Francisco Franco, *Caudillo de España por la gracia de Dios*, to quote the inscription of the coins bearing his likeness. This kingly consciousness of divine grace is unmistakably stamped on his countenance. A dreamy remoteness from the world is reflected in his glance which seems never to meet that of his interlocutor but to flow over and past him into some region of super-human or, rather, non-human transcendence.

Friends who knew the General before he was “chosen” tell me that originally he was a very jovial and sociable person, and that this aspect of enraptured isolation initially made its appearance in the first years of power, growing visibly with each succeeding year. He has become, so they say, a contemner of mankind, ever more repelled by the imperfection of all about him, ever more profoundly convinced of his own infallibility. But this quixotic feature, which shows up strongly enough in photographs of him, is seen to be

overshadowed by another, diametrically opposed in its realistic quality: a super-sly look often observable in Spanish lawyers, which seems to wink the message: "Just you wait—you'll see how I take you in!"

As I mentally compared this reception with the solemnity of similar events in other countries, I could not help thinking that the austere Spanish *grandezza* had declined here to a kind of ironical, not to say insolent, attitude. This was, however, not altogether to be wondered at, considering the tiresome regularity with which ambassadors are accustomed to dance attendance every Thursday.

For the capitulation of the West before Spanish inflexibility means a triumph for the Caudillo that his people savor with thorough relish. As is untiringly maintained in speeches and newspaper articles, he is the man who was right all along while the other statesmen were wrong, the man who steadily trained his quixotic ideological eye on the devil in Stalin while others sought to stroke his fur the right way; and, on the other hand, he is the man who, with the peasant cunning of a Sancho Panza, was able to slip out of Hitler's clutches by presenting his confederate a bill in advance for his possible entry into the war—one which he knew would be too steep for acceptance. Franco is a Galician by birth, and in all Spain this folk of the northwestern part of the peninsula is famed for its dangerous cunning, for the virtuosity with which it cloaks its true purposes. Far from being offended, Spaniards are delighted when doubts are cast on the uprightness of their policies. "Till now he has got the better of everybody," a Falangist colleague boasted in my presence, "Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin—and he will be ready for the Americans."

This overwhelmingly triumphal attitude, according to which Spain is seen as a spoiled darling to be courted indefinitely and unconditionally, is diffused to a dangerous degree throughout the ruling circle. A will prevails to get as much as possible out of the current situation and it is not to be excluded that Spanish overeagerness will strain the bow to the snapping point. The commentaries that

accompanied Franco's claim to Gibraltar were not far from reflecting a gloating pleasure over England's difficulties abroad. For no other reason than to needle Paris, Marshal Pétain was offered asylum in Spain, and a box of oranges ostentatiously sent to him. And when the last seven war criminals were executed at Landsberg, the official newspaper *Arriba* felt impelled to say that Americans were war criminals like all the rest.

The gesture of reconciliation made by the West with the return of its diplomats has called forth no similar gesture from the other side; it has, on the contrary, reinforced the dogmatic resolve to demand everything without offering anything. In this, there is no doubt that it is Don Quixote, and not the realistic Sancho Panza, who holds the reins. "Franco is, politically, a clever tactician," an old army man who had known him from way back declared, "but a poor strategist. I mean, he is very good at muddling through from situation to situation but he is utterly incapable of a long-range view. Just because of his recent triumph, don't exaggerate his diplomatic skill. The same factor that has in matters of foreign policy reared a triumphal arch for him—the threat of war by the Soviet Union—is grinding away, internally, at the pillars upon which his power rests. Unfortunately, dazzled by his success, he shows every sign of having forgotten at what tremendous sacrifice to his people he has purchased it." In fact, Spain does present something of the ominous atmosphere of the fourth act of classical tragedy: the moment when the hero has achieved the pinnacle of power, everything seems to be going well, and Destiny is already rapping inexorably at the door.

AFTER the reception at the Royal Palace, our taxi passed the Moorish guard that was escorting the Ambassador back to his palace. The chauffeur turned around and, waving a contemptuous hand at the receding splendor, remarked: "And the people are hungry." This was, to be sure, an undeserved rebuke inasmuch as a few hundred ceremonial soldiers and the unavoidable expenses arising from diplomatic protocol cannot rep-

resent a very sizable drain on the budget. But unjust or not, it is typical. Into whatever part of Spain one goes, with whatever man of the common people one speaks, the conversation inevitably turns within the first five minutes to the same old theme: hunger. From the moment rearmament began to drive world prices up, *hambre* became, from Andalusia to the land of the Basques, a kind of watchword weighing obsessively on the spirits of men.

A foreigner is often tempted to underestimate the difficulties under which the Spaniards labor to keep body and soul together. Strolling through the streets one sees neatly if plainly dressed people. A glance at the shop windows reveals rich displays of the most exquisite delicacies at prices that are readily within one's reach if one has money from outside Spain. (The only exceptions are a few scarce commodities like coffee or sugar, which fetch prices on the black market that would seem to us incredible.) Spain is a land of cheap vacations because pesetas are easy to get hold of if one has another currency with which to buy them. For the Spaniards, however, they come very dear because salaries are low even by European standards.

Something amiss is noticeable at the very outset when one has his shoes shined by one of the *limpiabotas* who are thickly concentrated in all the streets with their boxes and brushes, for all one pays is a peseta, or two at the most—that is, from two to four cents. It is the rate prevailing in Cairo or Calcutta; but even in Syria, or in Japan, one pays double that. A similar condition exists all the way down the line. A construction worker earns 15 to 18 pesetas daily (30 to 36 cents), a farm hand about 20. Even the policeman, who, after all, performs an important and responsible public function, does not make more than 600 pesetas a month. An office worker makes about 800, a teacher from 1,000 to 1,200. A bank manager receives a nominal salary of 3,000 pesetas a month; had he not the opportunity for lucrative supplementary earnings, he too would have to be his own cook and bottle-washer. For a modest meal in a restaurant comes to at least 30 to 40 pesetas; a suit not under 700, a pair of shoes

of middling quality about 300 pesetas. Expressed in terms of real wages, a pair of shoes costs a workingman a half-month's labor.

Undeniably, the complaint heard across the length and breadth of the country makes sense: with such prices, living has become impossible. Hunger is no longer a figure of speech, it is a reality. I have spoken with mothers who had not tasted sugar for months because they felt they had to sacrifice their meager ration to their children.

MISERY speaks in divers tongues, depending on geography and temperament. I have sat in Andalusian country taverns and, in company with the local folk, have drunk their mediocre wine while we ate snails soaked in vinegar. They accepted their destiny with a gloomy fatalism, without searching out causes and solutions. When I spoke of land reform and the reparceling of huge landed estates, they would shrug their shoulders. They knew large-scale irrigation and expensive capital equipment would be needed, and they did not see where either would come from. According to their view of the world, men may do what they may—things will not get better but, on the contrary, will be worse.

The word "strike" haunted the working classes of the Andalusian cities toward the end of April. The example of Barcelona and Bilbao was proving contagious, and even without benefit of newspapers the humblest were astonishingly well-informed as to all details of the events in the North. But by May 1, streetcars and trains were running as usual; the good Andalusians are voluble speakers but run few risks.

I found the poetic transfiguration of hunger in Galicia, that sister land to dreamy Ireland, with which it shares a common Celtic heritage. The workingman with whom I was sitting in the tavern pointed with a melancholy smile to the ham that hung juicily over the counter. "A kilogram costs 80 pesetas," he said wistfully. "Four days' pay. I can't afford it. It's only for men with money. All I can do is look at it devoutly as I would at a crucifix."

The remarkable thing was, however, that

despite such never ending complaints, no perceptibly active will to upheaval was present, except perhaps for industrial Bilbao, where an unruly Basque separatist and independence movement keeps itself in readiness for rebellion, even though conditions in general seem better there than in such poverty-stricken regions as Andalusia and Galicia. Even the strikes, which broke out last spring rather violently in Barcelona, Pamplona, and Bilbao, and, in a milder form, agitated Madrid, were planned less as decisive struggles than as simple demonstrations. And they ebbed away without any actual consequence except for a few meaningless reductions in prices.

I HAVE discussed aspects of the strikes at great length with Spanish friends. How was it that the passionate Spaniards displayed such classical restraint? And was there a guiding hand discernible, which suddenly, out of the shadow of illegality, revealed itself in political action? On this point there was much speculation, but nobody seems to know what really happened. There was for instance a government communiqué on the strike in the Biscayan region, in which names of arrested leading personalities were announced—and their connections with underground organizations. What truth this official announcement contained was mingled with very evident fiction intended to prove that first, foreign influences, second, the Communists, and third, the Freemasons, had acted as crafty seducers of the working classes (analogous to the Jewish-Marxist-plutocratic bogey conjured up by Hitler). In contradiction, there was the report, almost certainly authentic, that it was none other than the government party, the Falange, which had unleashed the Barcelona strike, with the purpose of unseating a very unpopular and corrupt governor.

But whatever conspiratorial elements did exist, they played a far less important organizational role than the will of an exploited people looking for a chance to pour out its troubles and wrath. Word must have been passed along from person to person: the dem-

onstration was as elemental and spontaneous as a sudden squall and rapidly spread far beyond its point of origin.

One must not overestimate the importance of underground organizations, insofar as they can be said to exist. As is known, the majority of the political prisoners were released in 1946 under conditions of *libertad vigilada*, according to which they must report periodically to the police but are free to pursue their callings. Most of these people continue, naturally, to be potential enemies of the regime; with them are associated others known to the police as enemies of the government but who are not necessarily arrested because of it. In conspiratorial lingo they are *quemado*, "marked" or "branded," and hence unsuited for real revolutionary activity since they would be eliminated at the very outset. In this category can be counted the famous Duchess of Valencia, who calmly plays at conspiracy with other "branded" politicians in her elegant Madrid home—nothing happens to her except when she wanders too far out of bounds.

An erstwhile socialist politician in whose company I was sitting in a public place in Granada suddenly grew silent when a man sat down at the next table, then made for the door. "I don't want my dossier expanded," he explained outside. When I asked about the possibilities of an effective underground organization, he roundly discounted them, explaining that the number of informers was so great that nothing significant could be kept hidden from the watchful eyes of the police for any length of time. On the other hand, the police themselves are permeated with opposition elements, as is evidenced by the fact that the guerrillas, who are still active in the Ronda mountains and the Sierra Nevada, are kept closely informed of all moves planned against them.

THE great unknown is the amorphous, politically unorganized mass, which suddenly revealed itself during the strikes as a power transcending parties, in a series of acts that fizzled out, to be sure, but did re-awaken a consciousness of the people's capacity for action, a capacity that might, some day, set

more specific goals for itself. That the Spaniards continue to stay put, is chiefly due to their indecision about what next. In the last twenty-five years they have tried practically every system of political organization, and none has worked. From the monarchy they turned to bourgeois democracy, which glided into socialism and Communism, which in turn made way for a traditional military dictatorship as the only means of breaking a deadlock. Consequently, the Spanish people feel a political skepticism bordering on utter hopelessness.

On April 30, about midnight, I asked a porter in the harbor of Málaga whether he was in favor of the strike announced for the next day. He shook his head and expressed himself as a fanatical, belligerent adherent of Franco. I invited the man to a glass of wine and began to question him. He had fought in the Civil War as a member of the Guardia Civil and had been so badly wounded that he had had to be mustered out of the service. He received a monthly pension of 150 pesetas (a little over three dollars!) and, although practically an invalid, had to drudge away at odd jobs. Wild rage welled under the surface of loyalty, yet he was ready once more to take up arms for the Caudillo. "Just consider," he declared, displaying a surprising degree of knowledge of historical detail, "in 1870 we imported an Italian prince and set him on the Spanish throne. He remained through two years of complete chaos, after which he renounced the Spanish crown forever, in his own name and that of his descendants. He was a very intelligent man. He had recognized a simple fact: Spain is not governable. And that is why any stable regime, no matter how bad, is bound to be better than any other." This old, embittered porter can stand as a symbol of the whole Spanish people. The fury is there. But it does not vent itself on anything.

To put it more precisely: not yet. It is quite possible that with the first blood-letting, instincts would be awakened in the mass, and means revealed that hitherto had been unknown to it. In any case, it is significant that even now there are those who reckon

with the possibility of a shipwreck and would like to keep at least two forepaws planted on dry land. This search for an "alibi" is quite clearly observable in the Church, which once went along through thick and thin with a regime that, as a prominent member of Catholic Action assured me, had given it a power it had never known since the days of Ferdinand and Isabella.

IN POINT of fact, Franco's seizure of power in Spain does present a certain analogy to the time of "Their Catholic Majesties." The latter were confronted by the task of uniting a land which, by virtue of geographic and ethnic differences, was sharply divided by opposing tendencies. The one ideological bond that could unite all was Catholicism, and through it the *Reconquista*, the expulsion of the Moors from the holy soil of Spain, was accomplished. Ever since, Catholicism has been as much a political idea as a religious one—if not more.

In this fact can be seen the reason for the unpleasant surprise that awaits a European or American in quest of the "deeper" mystical Spain. I have spoken with Princes of the Church and zealous Catholic propagandists and I have met only two persons, of modest station, who struck me as really pious in a deep, substantial sense: one was an officer, the other a young Carmelite monk. The prelates seemed to me uncommonly clever men of the world, skilled in the art of wielding power. Elsewhere in Europe, among good Catholics in Germany, France, or England, a conversation can immediately be struck up on the differences among communions, a conversation rooted in human aspirations, in which the quest for peace of soul is seen as the goal of religion, in which the efforts of different communions to find a way to that goal are seen as something open to discussion. But among Spanish Catholics one might as well talk to a stone wall. Here, arguments are to no avail, there can be no discussion of what, in their eyes, constitutes immutable and self-evident truth. Among Spanish Catholics I found myself in a position similar to that experienced on encountering convinced

Communists. In both instances it was as though talk was going on in completely different languages.

For this reason, visitors in Spain are more repelled than impressed by the magnificent processions of Holy Week. The images of the crucified Christ and the *mater dolorosa* are carried through the streets before a gaping throng that celebrates the Mysteries as it would a bull-fight, that is, as a gratifying spectacle.

*What I say here must not be taken as the last word on the subject, for this profanation of the sacred can also be viewed as a hallowing of the profane. A complete obliteration of boundaries has been effected and it is at least arguable whether this might not represent a higher form of religion than our clear-cut separation of spheres of experience. It is also arguable whether the Spanish religion should be regarded as Christian, whether a deeply rooted paganism has not here decked itself in a Christian mantle. But all this is beside the point. I am merely trying to supply background to the fact that Catholicism in Spain plays a preeminently worldly role. People call themselves Catholic here as others would conservative or nationalist elsewhere. "*Soy católico*" means: "I am a decent, loyal Spanish subject." Hence the problem of religious freedom in Spain is a difficult one to solve: a Protestant is regarded at the very outset as an enemy of the state and in a sense is such, because, according to all experience, non-Catholics tend almost inevitably to gravitate to opposition groups. This is a perfectly logical outcome when it is considered that Catholicism has become a kind of state ideology, with the clergy advancing arm in arm with the politicians.

THIS centuries-long process of secularization of spiritual power has created a dangerous situation, inasmuch as the anti-governmental skepticism of Spaniards carries over to the Church and brings about the paradoxical circumstance that a Spaniard can be a Catholic and an enemy of the Church at one and the same time. So, it is very characteristic that in all revolutionary upheavals the

Church and clergy should figure as the first victims, precisely because these have so long been identified with a social system that has become unbearable. All of which may not keep the firebrands from remorsefully returning to church a week later for confession.

Out of a knowledge of this untenable situation, which cost the Church a considerable and bloody toll during the Civil War, a movement has since sprung up marked by a concern for social reform, which seeks to combat Marxism in the spirit of Pope Pius XII, that is, by taking over its postulates in a Catholic sense and realizing them. Martín-Sánchez, one of the most influential figures in Acción Católica, is a landed proprietor and, for some years, has been fighting for land reform. And Ángel Herrera, the Bishop of Málaga, has just recently laid down the principles of an equitable distribution of the great landed estates, in a series of speeches which were reproduced prominently, if in censored form, in the press.

It cannot be denied that the Church has shrewdly utilized the influence accorded it. The blood of thousands of martyrs killed during the Civil War, the fact that not one of these renounced his fealty, proved to be a sowing which is still bearing fruit. Above all, the young, who are subjected almost from the first breath they draw to an ideological bombardment in school and youth organizations by the Church, are to be seen attending Mass in relatively greater numbers than in any other country. Even if such pious zeal is often no more than lip service, the fact cannot be denied that Catholicism does condition the thinking of all young Spaniards, even of the insurgents in their midst. It is significant that the Falange, which was first modeled on the Italian Fascist pattern and originally moved in an anti-clerical element, was unable to hold on to its ideological baggage, so that today it is a hollow shell, a mere apparatus whose only spiritual capital is, in the last analysis, Catholicism.

As has been said, Franco's position is, in this respect, similar to that of "Their Catholic Majesties." He too completed a *Reconquista* under the sign of the cross against a

20th-century Islam; the cross is still the sign under which his following is massed. Spaniards show no sign of breaking out of the magic circle of their religiosity. On the other hand, the Church has, in the last few months, begun to revise its attitude toward the regime. The Cardinal-Primate of Toledo suddenly announced in April that the state has its tasks and the Church hers, and that the areas of responsibility must be sharply divided. Martin-Sánchez was allowed to receive the Order of Isabella the Catholic, conferred on him recently by the government, but strong expressions of disapproval were heard from Catholic Action circles. All these are storm signals, and, very possibly, so are the not unfounded reports that political bigwigs are salting away money in great quantities in Switzerland and Uruguay.

THERE is only one *deus ex machina* which can stave off impending mischief: the dollar. The strikes have affected the United States both favorably and unfavorably. On the one hand, Spain is not so stable as its untroubled surface had allowed one to suppose; but on the other, popular resistance is in only a small degree political, and is, rather, an outgrowth of material despair. In other words, the enemy in Spain is not Communism but, quite simply, hunger, which can be stilled.

The big question comes down to one thing: whether the dollars, which Franco expects with the same confidence that he would await daybreak after a long night, will be applied effectively to the bettering of conditions. I am not referring here to official corruption—which is after all in the best Spanish tradition, though aggravated by small salaries and the need to pick up extra income—but to that honorable beggar's pride which will not allow even the benefactor to meddle in Spanish matters, as that same benefactor has done in the case of the Marshall Plan beneficiaries, with their approval. Viewed realistically, the question is no longer whether Franco will direct his regime along more democratic lines but quite simply whether his regime is capable of governing.

It is unjust to qualify the Spanish government simply as reactionary. If Spain preens itself on having the most advanced social legislation in the world—what with insurances of all kinds: hospital, old-age, large-families—this claim is well founded. But the other side of the shield reveals a bureaucratically interventionist economy and an isolationist drive to autarchy which paralyzes private initiative and discourages foreign capital. The result is that an increase in production, which alone could bring about a really higher standard of living, is, to an unimaginable degree, made more difficult, and hence indefinitely deferred. The innate Spanish lack of discipline struggles with the help of lies and bribery against bureaucratic resistance, in such wise that the legal lattice-work is practically not to be seen under a quite grotesquely intertwined growth of illegality.

I find it hard to believe that this condition would be improved by another regime; every reform issuing from the state is somehow swallowed up in the Spanish jungle. That is why it is idle to discuss what kind of state would be better for this country. One is tempted to apply to the present Spanish situation, taken as a whole, the words of a celebrated conservative politician of the 19th century, Romero Robledo: "Things will not better themselves of themselves, nor is there any who can better them, nor is it better that they should be bettered." The practical consequence of such an attitude is muddling through. Spain is like an ancient house, whose first floor is inhabited by millionaires and its basement by have-nots; the latter would like to live upstairs, but everyone has long since given up any thought of moving into a new building. Quite the contrary: if the neighbors should take it into their heads to offer a blueprint that would tear down the dangerously decayed walls, there would be shrieks from above and cries of bloody murder from below—and millionaires and have-nots would be united as never before. There is no remedy at hand except concrete reinforcements and attendance upon the will of heaven.

AMERICAN ZIONISTS MOVE TOWARD CLARITY

To Be or Not to Be "Ingathered"

JUDD L. TELLER

THE 23rd World Zionist Congress this past summer should have been a triumphal convocation. Here were the representatives of world Zionism meeting for the first time in Jerusalem, fifty-four years — almost to the day — after the first World Zionist Congress in Basel proclaimed that "the aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a publicly-recognized and legally-secured home in Palestine." It should have been a particularly pleasant occasion for American Zionism, whose aid, during the past decade, had been so instrumental in the establishing of the new state.

Yet few were really surprised that the Congress was something less than a celebration. There had been serious misgivings about calling it at this time despite the fact that, under the World Zionist Organization's constitution, congresses were to be convened once every two years and the last one had taken place far back in 1946. It was feared that

As JUDD L. TELLER points out in this article, after the establishment of the State of Israel, the world Zionist movement, and its American branch particularly, was in the position of a mother who had given away her last child in marriage. What, now, did she have left to live for? In August, the 23rd World Zionist Congress met in Jerusalem to try to answer this question. The results were, however, neither happy nor conclusive. It developed that on such crucial matters as the future of the American Jewish community and the relations between Israel and world Jewry a profound cleavage existed between the American and Israeli points of view. Why this came about, and what its implications are, is the subject of Mr. Teller's analysis. Mr. Teller covered the Jerusalem Congress for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, and has written widely on Jewish, especially Zionist, affairs. His most recent article in COMMENTARY was "The Israeli Voter Ponders the 'Moral Crisis,'" in the February 1951 issue.

neither the American Zionists nor the Israelis were as yet capable of adjusting themselves to the new situation in which both suddenly found themselves. American Zionism had been the big brother of the Jewish independence movement in Palestine. Now the Jews of Palestine were the sovereign people and sovereign government of Israel, and their erstwhile big brother, though proud and happy, could not help but wonder where he stood — especially since there came to his ears brazen murmurings from Israeli sources that he had no place to stand at all.

The changed relation between the new Israeli state and the old Zionism was evident in many ways, big and small. Had the Congress met in Palestine at any time under the Mandatory regime, the enthusiasm of the Jewish population would have scaled a hysterical pitch. But when the first delegates to the first World Zionist Congress ever to meet on the soil of Zion began to arrive in Jerusalem early last August, the average Israeli barely took notice of them. He was too distressed with economic problems and the indecisive results of the elections to the second Knesset to be much concerned with "tourists." And the delegates, though some never went beyond the area bounded by the King David Hotel and the convention hall, were aware of and hurt by this lack of attention. They had, after all, done their share "to make this all possible."

Indicative of the new state of affairs was the way Prime Minister David Ben Gurion could affect the prestige of American Zionist leaders by lunching with them publicly in the dining room of the King David Hotel, or just barely nodding to them when he passed them in the lobby. Even press agents for Abba Hillel Silver and Emanuel Neumann, who had been engaged in a bitter struggle with Ben Gurion, quickly spread word of a "significant meeting with the Prime Minister"

when the latter extended them an invitation to tea.

Opening against such a background, the 23rd World Zionist Congress might have ended in collapse; its leaders were relieved that it ended only in crisis.

THE functions of American Zionism had always seemed clear and obvious to its adherents: to help increase Jewish numbers and landholdings in Palestine, raise funds to this purpose, recruit political support for it, and resist all who might attempt to frustrate it. True, the Basel program, and all subsequent Zionist manifestos, asserted their desire to assemble "the Jewish people" in a "publicly-recognized and legally-secured home in Palestine." But the phrasing was obscure and the implications of this doctrine for every Zionist, privately, were remote, and had almost entirely escaped American Zionism. In recent years there had been a large enough job to do for the relief and succor of European Jewry. It was tortuous enough to obtain from the Mandatory government certificates to bring into Palestine from Eastern Europe the young pioneers who had undergone special training and indoctrination for collective agricultural work and, at a later date, Jews from Central Europe who were clamoring for Palestine as an asylum. No one requested, and the course of events in Palestine at that time did not demand, American Zionism to contribute immigrants. All that American Zionists were asked to do was to supply financial and political support—which they gladly did.

But in recent years Zionists had no monopoly on financial aid to Palestine's Jewish community. In the 30's, when the meaning of Hitler for European Jewry began to unfold before the eyes of the entire world, American Jews who were largely indifferent to Zionism, but were much moved by the sufferings of their fellow Jews, joined in collecting funds for Palestine, which they saw as the most likely refuge for the persecuted. This led to the founding of the United Jewish Appeal, which in concert with the local welfare funds and community councils has become the most important fund-raising agency. The major

Zionist funds themselves have now become beneficiaries of the UJA, and though the Zionists still argue that theirs is the decisive effort behind the success of UJA, fund-raising for Israel has long ceased to be the sole and exclusive province of the Zionist movement in this country.

For this declining role in fund-raising, American Zionism was more than compensated in the 1930's by the quantitative and qualitative significance of its political assignment. The assignment consisted of spreading the Zionist gospel in the American Jewish community, and of engaging the influence of the United States government, the Congress, and the press in support of the Balfour Declaration and, subsequently, against the innumerable restrictive White Papers and supplementary edicts issued by the Mandatory power. Within Zionism, the role of the Americans was as powerful allies of the militant—and ultimately victorious—wing of Zionism that demanded a Jewish state without delay.

Meeting at the Hotel Biltmore in New York City during World War II, an emergency conference of American Zionists endorsed an aggressive program proposed by David Ben Gurion, then chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive. What soon was dubbed the Biltmore Program proclaimed the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine as the primary and overriding demand of the Zionist movement—thus stating explicitly and firmly an aim which the Basel program at best only timidly implied. As a result of their alliance with the militants of world Zionism, the majority of American Zionists, led by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, joined forces with Ben Gurion at the 22nd Zionist Congress in 1946 to force the retirement of Chaim Weizmann, who continued to counsel moderation and restraint.

The period between 1946 and 1948 was the Golden Age of American Zionism. Zionists galvanized American public opinion, at a tempo and by methods which often dismayed the non-Zionists. Zionist propaganda, financed and planned largely in this country, utilized every possible international platform—the Anglo-American Inquiry Committee,

two UN Palestine Commissions, and the Political Committee of the UN General Assembly—to advocate and press for Jewish statehood. American Zionist leaders testified jointly with the Palestine Zionist leaders before these tribunals. Instructions to the Jewish community in Palestine that determined the means and ways of the struggle for statehood were the joint product of Palestine and American Zionist leadership.

The Zionists, to be sure, did not always carry the burden alone. At crucial instances, non-Zionist aid was sought and obtained. Yet theirs was the major share, and it was largely because of them that the struggle was won, the state gained. May 15, 1948, when Israel was established, was a fateful, if exhilarating, day for American Zionism. For it immediately began to feel the agony of the mother who has given her last child in marriage. What did it have left to live for?

THE main activities of American Zionism had been fund-raising and political agitation. It had been divested of its fund-raising functions some years before, when Zionist funds became submerged in the UJA. Now the Israeli cabinet and Israel's ambassadors divested American Zionism of its political functions. Israeli policies, foreign and domestic, were determined by the Israeli cabinet. Representations to governments, including the government of the United States, were now made by Foreign Office personnel. American Zionist leaders concurred that this was as it should be. Yet, they apparently nursed a secret hope that they would still be consulted by their peers in the Israeli government: two sets of minds are better than one, and had they not demonstrated some measure of ability in recent years in bringing about this state, with its cabinet and its diplomatic personnel?

This secret hope was abruptly and publicly shattered by Israeli officialdom. Hoping to capitalize on the upsurge of pro-Israel sentiment among large sections of American Jewry unaffiliated with Zionism, Ben Gurion began to give them special marks of attention. Precisely when Abba Hillel Silver and Emanuel

Neumann found their status as Zionist leaders threatened by the disappearance of their political functions, Ben Gurion invited Jacob Blaustein, president of the American Jewish Committee and a non-Zionist, to come to Israel for a talk. For years it had been the position of American Zionist leadership that the Zionists alone spoke for the overwhelming majority of American Jews. Now Ben Gurion, by his invitation to Mr. Blaustein, gave reason to think that this was not, if it had ever been, his view. Indeed, when in the autumn of 1950 he invited a group of American Jewish leaders to Jerusalem to map out a four-point program of American aid, Ben Gurion chose (in addition to members of the Jewish Agency) representatives of the various fund-raising agencies who were largely non-Zionist. He completely ignored the indigenous American Zionist organizations, and it was only after some pressure that they were called in.

The tensions between American Zionism and Israel were fed by the fact that Silver and Neumann, who headed the formally non-partisan Zionist Organization of America, were in sympathy with the conservative-capitalist General Zionist party in Israel, which, since the elections to the first Knesset, constituted one of the pillars of the parliamentary opposition to the moderate-socialist Mapai government of Ben Gurion. Silver and Neumann saw in these invitations to non-Zionists a deliberate Mapai design to scuttle the American Zionist movement because it would not toe the Mapai line. As for Ben Gurion, he was persuaded that American Zionist leaders wished to use the Zionist movement as a vehicle for intervention in Israel's affairs in behalf of the right-wing General Zionist opposition, and was only too happy to see Silver and Neumann resign—as they soon did—from the Jewish Agency Executive.

American Zionist anger at Ben Gurion's trafficking with non-Zionists was exacerbated by the Zionists' own feeling of inadequacy and uselessness. Time and again this sense of uselessness was reinforced by the aloof behavior of Israeli representatives in this coun-

try. (When Zionists were about to launch a campaign in 1950 to enlist American support for Israel on the Jerusalem issue then before the UN, Abba Eban coldly told them that Israel could take care of its own international affairs.) The Zionist leaders were of the belief that their movement, though its membership was dwindling, could still be of great service to Israel. But it could not be gainsaid that Zionist morale was deteriorating, Zionist prestige was slipping. A Zionism without some certified declaration of Israeli approval seemed more and more of an oddity. Both affiliated and peripheral Zionists had begun to ask privately, and in some instances publicly: "Is a Zionist organization necessary?"

It was in this mood of uncertainty that the 23rd World Zionist Congress met. Its purpose was to formulate a *raison d'être* for the Zionist movement and clarify the Israelis' attitude to it.

NO SOONER had the Congress convened than one thing became certain: Israeli leadership, despite its new-found warmth for non-Zionists, was deeply concerned with the future of the Zionist movement. This interest had already been evidenced—though without dispelling skepticism on the matter—when Mapai endorsed Nahum Goldmann's proposal, several months before the Congress, that the Israeli parliament vote a special status for the Zionist movement, one which would give it supremacy over all foreign Jewish groups working in behalf of, and in, Israel. It was further testified to by Ben Gurion's preoccupation—often to the dismay of the Israeli-born "young Turks" on his staff—with the details of Congress affairs.

Even more demonstrative of the Israeli attitude was the series of solemn affirmations from the Congress rostrum by Israelis of all parties that the Zionist movement must expand to embrace larger sections of Jewry. The Americans were gratified, even elated, over these declarations of confidence. But it soon became obvious that the simple word "Zionism" hid a world of ambiguities and that behind the assurances of esteem there was a profound cleavage of opinion between the

Israelis on the one side and the American delegation on the other.

The American contingent at the Congress saw its future role in familiar terms, comprising fund-raising and political activity. They argued that the non-Zionists are fair-weather friends only, not to be relied on in a real diplomatic crisis when political support was needed; that the Zionists are the leaven of all fund-raising; and that the Israeli bond drive had learned its bitter lesson in that the bulk of its sales had been to Zionists and through Zionist groups. The Israelis found nothing to object to in all of this—if American Zionism wished to compete in helpfulness with other Jewish groups, why should it be discouraged? They even conceded that non-Zionists might fail Israel in crucial moments.

But the Israelis dissented vigorously, and sometimes venomously, from the view that these were American Zionism's primary functions. Even as the main task of American Zionism up to May 1948 had been the realization of the Biltmore Program calling for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, they asserted, so primacy must now be given to "self-realization," i.e., to recruiting from amidst American Zionist ranks youthful pioneers for Israel.

It was on this point that the Americans and the Israelis clashed head on.

THE Israelis argued: We shall neither be able to maintain the increasing population of our state, nor secure our crazy-quilt frontiers, if we do not cultivate all the arable land in our possession and reclaim the marshes and wastelands of our territory. At present, our greatest shortage is manpower, so that we are not only unable to implement fully our plans for new settlements, but we are short-handed even in our old settlements. The Eastern European countries, which provided us with pioneers up to World War II, are now shrouded behind the Iron Curtain. Immigration from Oriental countries, which will soon also be tapering off, does not provide the kind of human material suited, except after further educational training, for a sustained effort at self-dedicated pioneering. To prevent a

further relapse from the high cultural and moral standards that were Israel's before 1948, the immigration of backward Orientals must be counterpoised by an idealistic immigration of youngsters from the democratic West. America's five million Jews can surely provide most of the five thousand pioneers annually, which are the minimum required if Israel is to maintain at least its present pace of development. In addition, we need specialists from America, technicians and investors who, along with their assets, are ready to invest their own persons here, for these are the best type of investors.

Some Israelis cited the example of Germany and warned American Jews that they had better come while the coming was good. Other Israelis even agreed with the Americans that the United States indeed was a wonderful land and very likely "it won't happen there"—but there can, after all, be no absolute guarantee. All Israelis cited classical Zionist doctrine which, in the main, juxtaposed a "full Jewish life" in a sovereign Jewish territory to debilitating existence in a permanent *galut* ("exile").

This was the Jerusalem program proposed by the Israelis. Looked at abstractly, it was not an unreasonable program to suggest to one's fellow Zionists. But, in fact, when it was broadcast from the Congress rostrum to the American delegates in Convention Hall, it did not sound like a proposal at all. It sounded like a threat, an admonition, an ultimatum.

Behind most Israeli talk of the need for pioneers (*halutzim*) from the United States, there seethed the doctrine that the *golah*, i.e. Jewish existence outside Israel, was spiritually doomed, that its main function now is to serve as a reservoir of manpower for Israel. This intransigent Israeli conviction that the *golah* is fated and sterile was best illustrated by an episode at a conference of Ichud on the eve of the World Zionist Congress.

Ichud is the world federation of moderate Labor Zionists, and Mapai is its Israeli affiliate. In its proposed platform, Ichud listed all of Zionism's aims in one initial sentence. Some Americans, notably Louis Segal, Secretary General of the Jewish National Work-

ers' Alliance, suggested inclusion in the initial sentence of a phrase committing the Zionist movement to the "enrichment of Jewish life and culture throughout the world." His Israeli compatriots in the Labor Zionist movement balked almost unanimously. They did not object, they said, to its inclusion in some latter part of the statement, but it was certainly out of place in the initial sentence. Besides, it was unnecessary, for was it not an obvious aim of Zionism? But they did not remark that the other aims listed at the outset of the statement were even more obvious.

The Israelis' logic was clear. It was a fatuous distraction for Zionism to commit itself to the enrichment of Jewish life outside Israel when the salvation of the Jewish group can only be through assembly in Israel. In line with this view, the Congress resolutions dealing with Jewish culture laid their primary emphasis on "Hebraization of the *golah*," the dispatching of "instructors to the *golah*," etc. This implies none of the spectral perils of dual allegiance exorcised by the American Council for Judaism, but it indisputably indicates a dim view of the cultural potential of Jews outside Israel, and it is unambiguous notice that Israel will wrestle for cultural hegemony in the world Jewish community.

THE American Zionist contingent, caught in an ideological downpour that drowned out all familiar signposts, was confused. They perceived and reacted only to the more obvious implications: after years of service to the cause, they were being challenged to submit their Zionist credentials to a new examination, and were told that their response to the call for manpower would be the measure of their Zionist sincerity. They felt that it was unfair thus to challenge veterans of the cause, and, moreover, that their assignment was absurd in the light of American realities—such efforts at recruiting *halutzim* on a large scale must inevitably meet with a feeble affirmative response and vigorous hostile resistance.

Rose Halprin of Hadassah best expressed the position of the average American delegate. American youth, she explained, cannot be ex-

pected to come to Israel in any large numbers, not yet anyhow, and allowance must be made for the disparity between living standards in the United States and in those countries that have hitherto supplied such youth. But what really touched her to the quick was the indiscriminate use of the, from her point of view, obnoxious term *galut*. Mrs. Halprin fell back on a recent *ad hoc* distinction by Ben Gurion—a distinction alien to doctrinal Zionism, it may be noted—between *galut* (“exile”) and “dispersion”: *galut* was something that either expels or persecutes the Jew, while America does neither; the Jew is neither forced out of there, nor does he wish voluntarily to depart: ergo, America is not *galut*! Some of the American addresses even went so far as to imply that the American Jewish community had almost the status of Israel herself, in that America was also a miraculous exception in two thousand years of melancholy Jewish history.

None of the Americans faced the basic issue, however. Is it or is it not the private obligation of every Zionist to settle in Israel? And—contrary to the classical Zionist distinction between the sunlit “homeland” and the shadowed existence in *galut*—do American Zionists believe that the Jewish group and its culture can flourish in America? The Americans did not challenge or even attempt to revise the Zionist idea that the assembly of the Jewish people in its own state is the sole and exclusive guarantee for Jewish group survival; they did not question the Israeli claim to the Jews of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. They only requested that American Zionists be exempt from deducing the logical consequences of this doctrine for themselves.

The Israelis were finally persuaded that it would not be sound *Realpolitik* to issue at this time a Jerusalem proclamation highlighting the implications of the Basel program for American Zionists. Thus, the Americans won. They won tactically only, because—with the exception of some poignant remarks by Hayim Greenberg on the values created by *galut* life “in time” rather than “in space”—the American Zionists had not risen, intel-

lectually, to the occasion. Their response was instinctive. They were doubtless fearful of the effect on American Jewish and non-Jewish opinion of a statement by the Zionist Congress even insinuating a relation between the doctrinal commitments and private obligations of American Zionists. Probably they were even more worried about having to define their attitude toward themselves as Zionists and American Jews.

THE fact is that American Zionists had never done much hard thinking about Zionism. Like all Americans, they were inclined to shun intellectual “talk” and concentrate on “getting things done.” Most of the persons leading American Zionism today came to maturity during the era of so-called “synthetic Zionism,” authored by Chaim Weizmann, which flourished between the two World Wars. Weizmann’s was a shrewd, opportunistic Zionism, in which doctrinal aims were subordinated to practical advantages. Weizmann, though an ardent Zionist himself, saw the actual need of Zionism as being an orchestrated effort. Each section of world Zionism performed specific functions, none was requested at this time to give a full solo performance. East European Jewry was expected to provide *halutz* manpower but not international political influence; American Jewry was expected to provide the bulk of financial and political support, but was never requested to supply manpower. And though American Zionists came to side with the “militants” against Weizmann, they did so for practical, not doctrinal reasons: militancy, they felt, “worked.” Their day of reckoning with Zionist theory was postponed. That day came this year, in Jerusalem.

Now that the American Zionists reject the Israeli suggestion that a Jew must settle in Israel to be qualitatively a full Jew, they find themselves suspended in a limbo somewhere between the Israeli stand and the varieties of non-Zionist positions. Their practical achievements on behalf of the new state have been successful even beyond their hopes. Now they must face up to the question of ultimate ends. What, really, do they want, as Jews?

To retain at least some of its influence in Israel, and to earn the special diplomatic status that the Israeli government has promised it, American Zionism will have to assume the obligation of providing pioneers, on a respectable scale, for Israel. But now that it has thrown overboard the doctrine of "self-realization," its appeal for *halutzim* will have to be on a "philanthropic" basis—"contribute manpower to Israel." There is dishearteningly little prospect of any quick material success. Nor will the nervous knowledge that, should American Zionism fail, Israel will certainly wash its hands of it, be conducive to the kind of assurance that propaganda seems to need in order to make its mark.

The task will be made doubly difficult by the fact that, at the same time, to vindicate their rejection of "applied Zionism" and of the doctrine of the predestined demise of all Jewish group life outside Israel, American Zionists will be morally obligated to shift the

emphasis of their activities so as to bear out their faith in the permanence of American Jewry. To this end, they will have to search for activities other than the "Hebraization of the *golah*" proposed at—and accepted by—the Congress.

Substantial numbers of both Israelis and American non-Zionists tend to regard their respective communities as culturally separate and autarchic entities—Israelis saying, in essence: "Come or you excommunicate yourself"; non-Zionists urging, in essence: "Let us hoe our respective gardens." American Zionism, trapped between these two pressures, is seeking some third way out. It argues for the necessity of wedding American to Jewish values, and also for the introduction of Israeli Hebrew culture as a dominant theme of the American Jewish home and school. That these two aims are simultaneously realizable is what American Zionists will have to set themselves to demonstrate.

THE MIND OF THE MASS MURDERER

The Nazi Executioners—and Those Who Stood By

L. POLIAKOV

THE author remembers very clearly the time when, some years younger than he is now, he played at hide and seek with the German and Vichy police, as did the large majority of the Jewish population of France. Humiliating imprisonment, painful forced labor, misery without end—this was what he saw as the terrible price of capture. But that he was fleeing a gruesome death in huge factories of extermination—that simply did not cross his mind.

Such an attitude was the usual one: Cassandra voices were rare; and the warnings sent out by the British radio were generally considered to be the inevitable exaggerations of wartime propaganda. The mind resists what exceeds its experience; the existence of an industry of death for death's sake was difficult to accept. Among the Jewish masses in Poland there was the same tendency to resist the evidence, notwithstanding the proximity of the death camps. As for the free world, in the United States and England, in spite of much and widely diffused information, numerous doubters could be found up to the very day that the advance of the Allied

armies laid bare the complex workings of the machinery of Maidanek and Auschwitz.

Since then, with the limits of the impossible rolled back by these discoveries, the human species has become the richer for a new experience; the term *genocide* has made its entry into international usage. "A shame that will weigh on Germany for a thousand years!" exclaimed Hans Frank, one of the defendants at Nuremberg; for a while the very idea of a German became identified with that of a criminal and barbarian. It is characteristic of public opinion to be as forgetful as it is emotional; yet the fact remains that in the long and varied history of the human species, the Nazi enterprise stands without rival—something irreducible in the practice of evil, a "special case," as Elliot Cohen rightly puts it.

But even if *homo hitlerius* is a special sort of being, we still want to know how he became what he was. Whoever can bring to that question a satisfactory and penetrating answer will probably have put his finger on at least one root of the maladies that agitate our contemporary society. My intention is more modest: merely to look into the recesses of the souls of these criminals, who, after all, were only men. What was the make-up of the technicians, big and little, of the German mass-production death industry? And, over and above the universal factors that may be revealed, what can be further disengaged as specifically German factors?

WHAT kind of men are they that organize and supervise concentration camps in which they murder whole groups, classes, and races of their fellow human beings? What is the mentality of the broader strata of the population who apathetically witness this ghastly extermination without even a protesting murmur? L. POLIAKOV here presents a documented analysis of the psychological matrix of genocide. Mr. Poliakov is research director of the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris. In numerous articles in COMMENTARY and elsewhere, he has set down some of the fruits of his studies of the catastrophe that befell the Jews—and the human spirit—under Nazi totalitarianism. His latest book, *Bréviare de la Haine* ("Breviary of Hate"), was published recently in Paris, and the present article is drawn to some extent from the materials of that book. This article has been translated from the French by George J. Becker.

AMONG the German documents captured by the Allied armies there is one almost unique of its kind, a violent protest addressed to German Supreme Headquarters by General Johannes Blaskowitz, commander-in-chief in the East, on the subject of "anti-Jewish excesses" committed by the SS in Poland. The report is dated February 1940, a time when a démarche of this kind was still possible; after that we find no more such documents. Among the reasons advanced by

Blaskowitz in support of his protest, we come upon the following: "But the worst effect on the German people brought about by the present condition of things is the unconfined brutality and moral depravity that will spread rapidly like a plague through the most worthy German human material. If the high functionaries of the police and the SS resort to violence and brutality and speak out publicly in praise of it, then in no time at all violence will reign. With disconcerting speed, persons of like minds and tainted character get together, as they have done in Poland, in order to satisfy their bestial and pathological instincts. It is scarcely possible to hold them in leash, for they are bound to feel themselves authorized by official behavior and justified in any cruelty."

This source, it will be agreed, is an authoritative one, and the German general's reasoning suggests a first answer to the question we have asked ourselves: *psychopaths* exercised an essential role in the execution of the Hitlerian program. The Death's-head SS, which provided the cadres for surveillance, was selected from the SS, which in turn had been recruited from the young activists of the party. The personnel chosen for this task seem to have run to perverts and sadists, in the strict clinical sense of the terms. Apparently, in a country of more than seventy million people, there were more than enough of these types for the job.

It is not a pleasant account, but perhaps the reader will have some interest in dipping into the intimate journal kept by one of these lucid madmen—an intellectual, moreover—a Dr. Kramer, a physician at Auschwitz.

1 September 1942. Wrote to Berlin to order a Führer cap, belt, and suspenders. In the afternoon was present at the disinfection of one of the blocks with Zyklon B to destroy lice.

2 September 1942. Went out around three this morning to be present at a special action* for the first time. In comparison, Dante's *Inferno* seems almost a comedy. It's not for nothing that Auschwitz is called an annihilation camp! . . .

5 September 1942. Present this afternoon at a special action on prisoners from the Jewish camp (Musselment†), a horror of horrors.

* *Sonderaktion*, a Nazi term used to designate large-scale gassing of deportees.

† Prisoners having reached the last stages of

Dr. Thilo was certainly right when he said to me this morning that this place is the *anus mundi*. In the evening around eight another special action on a group of Hollanders. The men like to take part in these actions because of the special rations which they get on such occasions: a fifth of a liter of schnapps, five cigarettes, 100 grams of sausage, and bread.

6 September 1942. Today, an excellent mid-day meal: tomato soup, half a chicken with potatoes and red cabbage, *petits fours*, and wonderful vanilla ice cream. Around eight o'clock out again for another special action, the fourth I have witnessed.

23 September 1942. Last night around six or seven a special action. During the morning Obergruppenführer Pohl and his staff arrived at the Waffen SS house. The sentry before the door was the first to salute me. At eight in the evening, dinner with Obergruppenführer Pohl in the Führerheim, a real banquet. We had pie—as much as one wanted—real coffee, excellent beer, and sandwiches. . . .

7 October 1942. Present at the ninth special action. Foreigners and women.

11 October 1942. For dinner today, Sunday, we had roast hare—a whole thick leg—with dumplings and red cabbage. All for 1.25 RM.

12 October 1942. Inoculation against typhus, as a result of which strong general reaction with fever in the evening. Nonetheless out during the night for another special action: 1,600 persons from Holland. Frightful scenes in front of the last bunker! This was the tenth special action.

And Dr. Kramer's journal continues like this, alternating his notations of carefully numbered "special actions" with menus of the meals he particularly enjoyed or descriptions of the social activities at Auschwitz. For the killers had, amongst themselves, a quite flourishing social life. As Blaskowitz wrote: "With disconcerting speed, persons of like minds and tainted character get together . . . in order to satisfy their bestial and pathological instincts."

IF THERE were large numbers of psychopaths among those who ran the death camps, this does not yet explain entirely the mind

physical and moral enfeeblement were so designated in the camps.

of the executioner. In the German-occupied areas of the Soviet Union, there were no large death factories, no highly rationalized methods requiring the participation of only a limited number of "technicians." Instead, the victims were usually disposed of by shooting, quite openly in the light of day; at least a million Jews were killed in this way. These killings were carried out by detachments of police, the *Einsatzgruppen*, who traveled in the rearguard of the Wehrmacht. And here the selection of executioners was entirely fortuitous: purely by the vagaries of the mobilization order, certain men were taken out of the whole body of the German police on the eve of the Russian campaign and attached to the *Einsatzgruppen*. Their total number was around 3,000. We are thus confronted with an entirely random cross section of the German police force—here was no special psychological predisposition for the macabre task.

The *Einsatzgruppen* sent daily reports to Berlin, drawn up in the laconic and precise terms of military language: you get the impression you are reading a report on the campaign against the potato bug. Here is one example:

- 1) With respect to the armed forces which are conducting searches, it is absolutely necessary to supply them with axes, hatchets, and other similar instruments, since it has been observed that almost all doors, etc., are rusted or locked shut and can be opened only by force.
- 2) Even if at first sight there is no apparent access to a loft, the possibility that there are persons hiding there must still be considered. As a rule it is necessary to search every loft carefully, if necessary even from the outside.
- 3) Even if there is no cellar, persons are often to be found hidden in the narrow space between the ground and the floor. It is a good idea to remove some boards from the outside and send in police dogs (at Pinsk the police dog "Oste" did wonders) or to toss in a hand grenade, which inevitably forces the Jews to come out of their hiding places.
- 4) It is a good idea to sound the area around houses with a hard object, for many people conceal themselves in well-camouflaged holes.
- 5) It is recommended that the help of youngsters be secured in seeking out hiding places by promising them their lives will be spared. This method has been reported to be particularly effective.

As for the executions themselves, the reports introduce us to a new system of semantics developed for the operation: we find a vast arsenal of special expressions to designate the killings, a veritable burgeoning of terms, demonstrating even a certain degree of imagination. Along with such terms as "shot" or "executed" or "liquidated," one reads in these documents that a certain number of Jews have been "rendered inoffensive," or that the authors of the reports have "got rid of" so and so many Jews. Other expressions are more vague: "At Nikolaev and at Kherson, 5,000 Jews respectively were treated." Sometimes the idea is conveyed without words; the reports of Group A are embellished with a map inscribed with figures—and coffins. Certain regions have been "liberated" or "cleaned up" of Jews, or the Jews have been "taken care of." "Special treatment" is another widespread euphemism. But the most polite, the most discreet, and the most definitive term is "final solution"; in a given region "the Jewish problem has been definitively resolved." And so forth.

IN THE fall of 1947, one of the twelve major trials of war criminals conducted by American military justice at Nuremberg placed former members of the *Einsatzgruppen* on the benches of the accused. The trial, conducted with extraordinary fairness, lasted for nearly six months; each of the accused, interrogated successively by counsel, prosecutors, and judges, had ample opportunity to explain himself, and certain depositions were virtual confessions. To be sure, these men were fighting for their lives: but this fact, far from necessarily undermining the value of certain admissions, often leads, on the contrary, to some astonishing psychological revelations.

Orders from above: this was the primary excuse behind which the accused sought refuge. But they invoked not only this physical compulsion; there was also a certain sense of duty and even propriety—of a peculiar nature, to be sure. One of the killers, a defrocked Protestant pastor named Biberstein, when asked whether he did not sometimes feel disturbed by these interminable shootings carried out without the least semblance of trial, replied: "I am not a lawyer. . . . My

predecessor, who had considered these questions fully, was a *Volljurist** [qualified lawyer] and told me that everything was in order. I felt obliged to accept his opinion." This remarkable servant of God assured the court, moreover, that he had kept his religious sentiments intact; when the presiding judge asked why he had not felt it his duty to give his services as minister to those he was causing to be sent to a better world, he said, "I had reason to suppose they were atheists. . . . There is a parable, your Honor, 'You shall not cast pearls before swine.'" And he continued as from the pulpit, imperturbably: "When one spreads the word of God, one must not introduce it in situations where it is not fitting, when one is fundamentally convinced that the ground is not prepared for such a message."

At another trial of war criminals, Ugo von Woyrsch, a high Nazi dignitary, when questioned in the capacity of voluntary witness about certain statements that Himmler had made in his presence, produced this incredible sentence: "The Reichsführer SS was speaking and, if I may be permitted to criticize my former chief, his remarks were interminable."

Such was the quality of mind among Nazi executioners, even on the highest levels. The secular tradition of discipline, the practice of *Kadavergehorsamkeit*—blind obedience—provided a favorable soil for the growth of a bizarre psychological fruit—colorless, odorless, tasteless, and murderous.

But significantly, these men, unlike the professionals of the death factories, seem to have found no perverse satisfaction in the massacres they carried out. On the contrary, complaints about the "heavy task" imposed upon them keep recurring like a leitmotif. Thus the witness Graf: "The men of the Waffen SS told me that they would rather have fought in the front lines than remain here. I asked why and they answered: 'We don't want to say.'" Defendant Ohlendorf: "Many men suffered terribly and had for various reasons to be sent home, either be-

cause their nervous systems went to pieces, or because they could no longer stand it morally." Defendant Haensch: "One rule was laid down, according to which it was necessary to avoid forming 'commandos of shooters'; that is, it was necessary not to utilize the same men for successive executions." From the defendant Blobel, we have this pearl: "Our men who took part in the executions suffered more nervous strain than those who were to be shot." One of the reports of the Einsatzgruppen says: "Physical fatigue was easily tolerated by our men. Far more important was the extreme psychic strain placed upon them by the great number of liquidations. It was only by constant reminders of the political necessities that morale and decorum could be maintained."

Whatever the social and ideological supports that helped the killers in their task—iron discipline, devotion to the Führer, collective excitement, and emulation in savagery—certain more direct stimulants, and alcohol chief among them, were found to be indispensable. Immense drinking parties took place before and after the massacres. One German official, returned from a mission in the occupied territories, reported: "The Jews are taken aside and liquidated [and] the situations which arise are so anguishing that they cannot be described. The consequences for the German commandos are inescapable. In general the executions can be carried out only if the soldiers are stupefied with alcohol." It is true that there were exceptions to this rule. In the account of another witness we find that: "The action [at Novogrodek] was the work of a special SS commando, which, because of its idealism, carried out the executions successfully without recourse to schnapps."

In this context, the novel semantics of the Einsatzgruppen reports, of which we spoke earlier, yield their full meaning. The executioners could not bring themselves to look frankly at their work. They had to pretend that what they were up to was something other than plain murder. Their bestiality was, by the magic of verbal circumlocation and by reference to a fictitious state of affairs, translated into something normal and ordinary. In some reports, indeed, the mechanism of self-deception reaches astounding heights.

*A lawyer having completed a full course of studies and holding a state diploma. But no translation can render the particular tonality which *Volljurist* has in German.

Thus the leader of a commando reports: "The Jewish women have exhibited particularly disobedient behavior; for this reason 28 of them were shot at Krougloye and 337 at Moguilev." Or, "The Jews have shown an impudent and provocative attitude" or "have given proof of bad will toward their work." Einsatzgruppe B reported that an epidemic of scabies had broken out in the ghetto at Newel: "In order to prevent contagion, 640 Jews were liquidated. . . ." Group C reported that at Radomychl "it was impossible to furnish provisions for the Jews and their children. Consequently the danger of an epidemic was increasing. In order to put an end to this situation, 1,107 adult Jews were shot by the commando and 561 children by the Ukrainian militia." Certainly a bizarre way to combat epidemics!

He who has decided to drown his dog accuses him of madness. The Einsatzgruppen, committed to blind obedience, had to invent all sorts of good reasons for doing what they did. And they had also, as we noted, to invent a special off-hand and neutral manner of expression to make themselves believe that they were really engaged in doing something quite different. As a result, they converted themselves from men into frozen and mutilated souls. But the very need to deceive themselves may be taken as testimony that they still had—souls.

AS HAS been said, the exterminations in Russia were carried out by light of day, "as if on a stage," writes the Wehrmacht officer Major Rössler, whose eloquent protest merits quotation: "I have never seen anything like it, neither in the First World War, nor in the civil war in Russia, nor in the campaign in the West. I have lived through a good many unpleasant things—I was a member of the Freikorps in 1919—but I never saw anything like this. I find it impossible to conceive on what legal basis these executions are carried out; all that happens here seems to me completely incompatible with our views on education and behavior; in an absolutely open manner, as if on a stage, men are murdering other men. According to the accounts of soldiers who are often present at spectacles of this kind, some hundreds of people are thus killed daily."

If we consider that thousands of Germans—soldiers or members of the civil administration—were eyewitnesses of exterminations carried on in this open manner, then we may hope to find in their reactions to the spectacle an especially precious insight into the agonizing question of Germany's "collective guilt." Documents are not lacking: protests by officers and high functionaries were numerous and often impassioned. But their tone differs strikingly from the courageous accents of Major Rössler, whose protest is, to my knowledge, unique in its kind. This central idea can be summed up as follows: it is not in this manner, not in a manner so ostentatiously brutal, that *Germans* should "resolve" the Jewish problem within the framework of the New Order of Hitler, though it is certainly to be understood that such "resolution" can mean only one thing, the total disappearance of the Jews. Guilt was not felt for the deed whose necessity was accepted, but for the method, which somehow dishonored the national decorum.

"Mass executions have been carried out in a manner which does not correspond with our German conceptions," complains one high official. "Insufficiently dense occupation of the front lines makes it possible for civilians to flee to the Soviet lines and inform the Russians of what they have seen. Thus the mass executions of Jews, carried out in part in a manner not in keeping with our German ideas, have not remained a secret from the Russians. . . ." Even more revealing is a report drawn up by Heinrich Lohse, Gauleiter for the Baltic countries: "That the Jews must receive special treatment demands no elaboration. But that such things have taken place as are related in the attached report is scarcely believable. What is Katyn in comparison? What if these occurrences become known to the enemy and are exploited by him? If propaganda based on these facts should remain ineffective, it will be only because hearers and readers will find it impossible to believe."

Extermination of the Jews, then, goes without saying, "demands no elaboration"; but it should be carried out in such a way as not to shock German sensibilities, and above all should remain discreet, silent, unknown. Meanwhile, if some insufficiently hardened

young officers show a certain degree of emotion, they must be called to order, as we see in this extract from the daybook of an infantry division: "On the morning of 5 August several hundred Jews were shot at Rositten. . . . The divisional commander addressed to officers and men a grave injunction to abstain from all criticism and all personal attitude in regard to this situation." And the high military leaders, without ever intervening actively, take pains to hold the ordinary soldiers of the Reichswehr on the sidelines, publish orders and circulars forbidding them to take part in executions, forbidding them to take photographs, etc. Later, the perfected procedures adopted at Auschwitz and elsewhere, the recourse to "professionals," were to satisfy in part this truly collective wish of Nazi Germany: to get rid of the Jews without having to watch them die.

THE phenomenon which psychologists designate by the term "collective unconscious" is unexplored; it constitutes a delicate and deceptive terrain, on which one can advance only with extreme caution. But one cannot help thinking that there is a close relation between the sadistic behavior of the professional killers in the SS and the disconcertingly ambiguous reactions of the amateur killers and the multitude of witnesses involved in the murders carried out by the Einsatzgruppen. Among the operators of the death camps, consecration to an ideology had removed all inhibition, permitting perverse instincts to be satisfied with full liberty. But the other zealous, but more "normal," followers of the Führer, who had also been nourished on the propaganda of hate, had not rid themselves of all civilized inhibitions; in a multitude of souls this led to insurmountable conflicts, and for many a citizen of the Third Reich the extermination of the Jews constituted the only remaining way to put an end to a situation which had become intolerable. May not this be one of the reasons why, though the "final solution" horrified them, they yet sought it eagerly: once there were no more Jews, would not the executioners' torment come to an end?

Thus in the degree that the fate of the Jews became worse, as they were despoiled, ghettoized, starved, and killed on a greater

scale, collective hatred of them grew proportionately, and their total extinction was desired with increasing ardor. Indeed, a careful study of the Nazi archives reveals that extermination could not be said to have been deliberately projected during the years which preceded the war, but grew up in the course of the war in the Nazi orders of the day, through a sort of progressive and ineluctable elaboration. Even the word "*Endlösung*" meant at the beginning no more than the expulsion of the Jews, their elimination from the "German national body," and it was only by stages that it took on a more and more sinister meaning.* But—the history of many a crime informs us of this—it is in proportion to the wrong one does one's victim that one hates him more and more; and in this way the forces of evil, patiently nourished, end in explosion.

OF COURSE, the question of "collective guilt" spreads far beyond the circle of those who actually participated in or witnessed the Nazi massacres. Whether or not we believe it possible to draw up an indictment against a whole people, it is obviously of the greatest interest to inquire what was the reaction of the German populace as a whole to the treatment meted out to the Jews of Germany and of all Europe.

Abraham said: ". . . wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the city for the fifty righteous that are therein?" The fifty righteous of Sodom and Gomorrah, and many times more than that, existed in Hitler's Germany also. There was Canon Lichtenberg, who, imprisoned in October 1941 for his pro-Jewish sermons and public protests, asked the Gestapo to transfer him to the ghetto of Lodz and died in 1943 in the camp at Dachau. There was Anton Schmidt, sergeant-major in the Wehrmacht, who helped organize underground communication among the Polish ghettos. There was the anonymous German doctor who voluntarily followed his Jewish wife into the Warsaw ghetto and was killed there in the final battle of April 1943. Examples of this sort would certainly reach hundreds, perhaps thousands—and most will never be known. They have an important

*See "Eichmann: Administrator of Extermination," COMMENTARY, May 1949, by this writer.

place among the manifestations of German resistance against Hitler, which, however sporadic and ineffective, was nonetheless a living reality. But, generally speaking, such was the poisonous effect of the all-pervading Nazi propaganda and terror, and perhaps also the collective predispositions, that the German people remained as a group passive and inert, if not, as we shall see, actually guilty of complicity in the face of the murder of the Jews.

IN ANOTHER case, they did resist: the degree to which the popular will might make itself felt even in Nazi Germany is strikingly revealed in the history of another vast homicidal enterprise of Hitlerism, one which has remained relatively unknown precisely because it was broken off under the pressure of popular indignation. I refer to the "euthanasia" program for the killing of the mentally deficient and the mentally ill.

This program was introduced by a secret order of the Führer dated September 1, 1939, that is, on the day of the declaration of war. Its execution was turned over to the private chancellery of the Führer and was supervised by Karl Brandt, his personal physician. For operational purposes, Germany was divided into six regions, in each of which a "euthanasia station" was set up where the inmates of institutions for the insane and mentally deficient, both adults and children, were put to death, in groups of 15 or 20, through asphyxiation by carbon monoxide gas. In the course of two years nearly 70,000 victims were "liquidated" in this way. Although the program was surrounded with strict secrecy and the sudden deaths of the sick were explained to their families as resulting from "natural causes," the truth was not slow to leak out to the most diverse circles. The Lutheran and Catholic clergy made open and insistent protest. In certain cities, when the sick were being moved, crowds gathered and actual riots took place. In August 1941 the program was suspended—until the end of the war. Its personnel, more skilled from the experience thus acquired, were transferred to Poland, where they exercised their macabre abilities in the first camps for the extermination of the Jews—Chelmno, Belzec—which had just been organized. One of them, Dr.

Fritz Mennecke, asserted during his trial in Nuremberg that the Führer had been led to suspend the euthanasia program when his special train was held up by a threatening mob which had just been present at the removal of sick persons.

THIS is perhaps only a legend; but in this case how significant! No crowd ever gathered at the removal of Jews, who at this same period were leaving German cities for the East. Their departure took place amid general indifference. And yet they were not people who had been cloistered in asylums, but very recently had played a vital part in the life of the community.

Still further evidence comes from the German writer Muller-Claudius, who in 1942, when deportations were going full blast in Germany, made a series of secret observations concerning the reactions of his compatriots. He found 5 per cent enthusiastically in favor of the anti-Semitic program, 5 per cent definitely opposed, 21 per cent doubtful and disturbed, and 69 per cent absolutely indifferent. Another German author, Enno Kind, writing about the German resistance movement, states: "The year 1941 was marked by the beginning of the extermination of the German Jews; all the adversaries of the regime, as well as those who were neutral, were from that point on obliged to give proof of their personal courage in not abandoning their friends who were being persecuted by Hitler. And it must be admitted that the larger part of the indifferent elements gave up on this occasion the last feeble flickerings of resistance and passed over to the fascist camp. Thereafter humane sentiments had scarcely any place in Germany."

Thus the terrible fact seems to be that the response of most Germans to the most enormous organized crime in history was one of total indifference, essentially a deliberate effort to remain ignorant of everything having to do with the place, the time, and the specific content of the crime—an attitude which markedly assisted the Nazis in maintaining the veil of secrecy which they attempted to throw over their work of extermination. It was not means of information that was wanting: an indefinable mixture of fear, of shame,

and perhaps also of tacit connivance kept the mass of the Germans from wanting to know. And even today, the Germans maintain a dreadful, frozen silence over this most important fact in their national history: in the house of the hangman, too, one speaks not of rope.

ONE must note, also, another specific aspect of the Nazi crime against the Jews which involves a truly active participation by large segments of the German population—as receivers of stolen goods.

I do not speak merely of the involuntary and passive participation by the citizens of the Third Reich in the enrichment of the community and of the state as a result of the confiscation of Jewish property, the imposition of collective fines, etc. Nor yet of the innumerable cases of individual pillage in occupied countries, concerning which the astonishing Blaskowitz report, cited above, expresses itself as follows: “. . . there is naturally nothing surprising in the fact that the individual German makes use of every opportunity to enrich himself; he can do it without danger, for when the community in its entirety engages in robbery, the individual thief need not fear punishment.” What concerns us here is the organized and systematic distribution of the last earthly possessions of the millions of exterminated Jews, which were gathered and sorted in immense warehouses set up in the death camps themselves, afterwards to be distributed through the welfare bureaus and charitable agencies of Nazi Germany, under the characteristic label (invented, it would appear, by Himmler himself) of *Jüdisches Diebes-Hehler- und Hamstergut*—“goods stolen, received, and hoarded by Jews.”

At the Auschwitz camp alone, the warehouse for pillaged goods, known under the name of “Canada,” comprised 35 vast barracks and was staffed at certain periods by more than 2,000 prisoner-clerks. And we find in the records of the Winter Aid Society of Poznan province, for example, certain documents constituting a matter-of-fact complaint over a consignment of dresses because “a large number of the garments are soiled, partly covered with dirt and bloodstains; in one consignment of 200 dresses to the city

of Poznan, the yellow star had not been removed from 51 dresses.” Or, again, a circular from the central SS administration in July 1942 pointed out to the commandants of the camps that “the concentration camps have sent packages of clothing . . . certain ones of which contained articles stained with blood and damaged by bullet holes. Some of the packages were badly packed, so that persons not connected with the administration were able to learn of their contents.”

And there are other documents that reveal how clear and obvious it must have been to the recipient what the source was of the bundles of clothing used to assist needy Germans in the difficult days of war.

“Goods stolen, received, and hoarded by Jews.” What shall be said of the people who took these heartbreaking garments for themselves and their children, and—complained of the stains?

IT REMAINS for us to ask to what degree the collective spirit—even when so receptive as that of the Germans—can be successfully molded to the form set for it by the leader of a totalitarian mass, using for his purposes all the technical resources of the modern world. Was the great goal of the SS capable of realization? Hitler’s dream of a society of “beasts, violent, hard, and cruel”—could it have been brought into being?

Perhaps in the complex reactions of the killers, such as we have seen them to be, we may find one answer to this question. That self-deception of the murderers, their persistent malaise, even their self-pity, do these not express a mute protest, a confused recognition that in bringing death to others, it was a part of themselves that they destroyed? We come back, then, to what seems to be the deep-seated essence of Hitlerism: a burst of resentment, hate, and fury which, avidly directed at others, must in the final analysis inevitably turn in upon itself also. May we not be led to conclude that over and beyond his revolt against the Judeo-Christian spirit and ethics, the Führer was attacking a necessary and essential element of all human society; that it is inherent in the nature of man to see himself in others and to revere in them his own image and his own essence (the double signification of the word “humanity,”

identical in all languages, can have no other meaning). And may we not draw the further conclusion that vast collective killings, though they may be carried out with relative impunity in the course of battle, where combatants act within the ceremonial and legal framework of the art of war and are subject to reciprocal risk, cannot be used by one camp to exterminate to the last man those of the other camp—no longer as adversaries or as men, but as noxious insects—without wreaking psychic self-destruction on the perpetrators? To deny this image of man in the other is to kill it in oneself—and so mass extermination becomes national suicide.

It may be added that the history of the human race confirms this speculation, and so do the investigations of anthropologists. We are quite wrong when we attribute to savage or half-savage peoples a cruelty without limit or scruple. In all civilizations and among all races, making no exception of the most primitive peoples, the murder of a man, the assassination of an enemy, has always been a serious thing, heavy with consequences, subject to restrictions, expiatory ceremonies, and taboos without numbers. Whatever the complex psychic reasons, this is an absolutely universal rule.

Thus, however astonishing the powers which the modern totalitarian demiurges may wield, there will always be certain limits to the perversion and the robotization of even the most docile masses. It was only in a society of men devoted to death that new aspects of human behavior were able to develop; by a sordid irony, it was only among slaves, exhausted and moribund in the hell of a concentration camp, that the total excision of the moral sense of which the Führer dreamed was capable of achievement on a large scale.* But the sacrilegious attempt of the executioners carried the seed of its own destruction.

Such seems to be the lesson to be drawn from the ruins of the Third Reich. In contrast to the somber speculations about the future which abound in our unquiet day, perhaps this lesson may help us to face with somewhat more confidence the distant perspective of civilization in a technological age. Dehumanization, we have seen—and perhaps the world is ready to draw the moral from Hitler's ghastly demonstration—is self-murderous.

*Compare my article "Human Morality and the Nazi Terror," *COMMENTARY*, August 1950.

AN APOLOGY

A Story

BERNARD MALAMUD

EARLY one morning, during a wearying hot spell in the city, a police car that happened to be cruising along Canal Street drew over to the curb and one of the two policemen in the car leaned out of the window and fingered a come-here to an old man wearing a black derby hat, who carried a large carton on his back, held by clothesline rope to his shoulder, and dragged a smaller carton with his other hand.

"Hey, Mac."

But the peddler, either not hearing, or paying no attention, went on. At that, the policeman, the younger of the two, pushed open the door and sprang out. He strode over to the peddler and shoving the large carton on his back, swung him around as if he were straw. The peddler stared at him in frightened astonishment. He was a gaunt, shriveled man with very large eyes which at the moment gave the effect of turning lights so that the policeman was a little surprised though not for long.

"Are you deaf?" he said.

The peddler's lips moved in a way that suggested he might be, but at last he cried out, "Why do you push me?" and again surprised the policeman with the amount of wail that rang in his voice.

"Why didn't you stop when I called you?"

"So who knows you called me? Did you say my name?"

"What is your name?"

The peddler clamped his sparse, yellow teeth rigidly together.

THIS is the third of BERNARD MALAMUD's stories to appear in these pages. "The Prison" (September 1950) was included in Martha Foley's anthology *Best American Short Stories of 1950*. Mr. Malamud has, besides, published fiction and reviews in *Partisan Review*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Atlantic Monthly*.

"And where's your license?"

"What license?—who license?"

"None of your wisecracks—your license to peddle. We saw you peddle."

The peddler did not deny it.

"What's in the big box?"

"Hundred watt."

"Hundred what?"

"Lights."

"What's in the other?"

"Sixty watt."

"Don't you know it's against the law to peddle without a license?"

Without answering, the peddler looked around but there was no one in sight except the other policeman in the car and his eyes were shut as if he were catching a little lost sleep.

The policeman on the sidewalk opened his black summons book.

"Spill it, Pop, where do you live?"

The peddler stared down at the cracked sidewalk.

"Hurry up, Lou," called the policeman from the car. He was an older man though not so old as the peddler.

"Just a second, Walter, this old guy here is balky."

With his pencil he prodded the peddler who was still staring at the sidewalk but who then spoke, saying he had no money to buy a license.

"But you have the money to buy bulbs. Don't you know you're cheating the city when you don't pay the legitimate fees?"

"..."

"Talk, will you?"

"Come on, Lou."

"Come on yourself, this nanny goat won't talk."

The other policeman slowly got out of the car, a heavy man with gray hair and a red face shiny with perspiration.

"You better give him the information he wants, Mister."

The peddler, holding himself stiff, stared between them. By this time some people had gathered and were looking on but Lou scattered them with a wave of his arm.

"All right, Walter, give me a hand. This bird goes to the station house."

Walter looked at him with some doubt but Lou said, "Resisting an officer in the performance of his duty."

He took the peddler's arm and urged him forward. The carton of bulbs slipped off his shoulder, pulling him to his knees.

"Veh is mir."

Walter helped him up and they lifted him into the car. The young cop hauled the large carton to the rear of the car, opened the trunk and shoved it in sideways. As they drove off, a man in front of one of the stores held up a box and shouted, "Hey, you forgot this one," but neither of them turned to look back, and the peddler didn't seem to be listening.

ON THEIR way to the station house they passed the Brooklyn Bridge.

"Just a second, Lou," said Walter. "Could you drive across the bridge now and stop at my house? My feet are perspiring and I'd like to change my shirt."

"After we get this character booked."

But Walter querulously insisted it would take too long and though Lou didn't want to drive him home he finally gave in. Neither of them spoke on the way to Walter's house, which was not far from the bridge, on a nice quiet street of three-story brownstone houses with young trees in front of them, newly planted not far from the curb.

When Walter got out, he said to the peddler, "If you were in Germany they would have killed you. All we were trying to do was give you a summons that would maybe cost you a buck fine." Then he went up the stone steps.

After a while Lou became impatient waiting for him and honked the horn. A window shade on the second floor slid up and Walter in his underwear called down, "Just five

minutes, Lou—I'm just drying my feet."

He came down all spry and they drove back several blocks and onto the bridge. Midway across, they had to slow down in a long traffic line and to their astonishment the peddler pushed open the door and reeled out upon the bridge, miraculously ducking out of the way of the trailers and trucks coming from the other direction. He scooted across the pedestrian's walk and clambered with ferocious strength up on the railing of the bridge.

But Lou, who was very quick, immediately pursued him and managed to get his hand on the peddler's coat-tails as he stood poised on the railing for the jump.

With a yank Lou pulled him to the ground. The back of his head struck against the sidewalk and his derby hat bounced up, twirled, and landed at his feet. However, he did not lose consciousness. He lay on the ground moaning and tearing with claw-like fingers at his chest and arms.

Both the policemen stood there looking down at him, not sure what to do since there was absolutely no bleeding. As they were talking it over, a fat woman with moist eyes, who despite the heat, was wearing a white shawl over her head, and carrying, with the handle over her pudgy arm, a large basket of salted five-cent pretzels, passed by and stopped out of curiosity to see what had happened.

Seeing the man on the ground she called out, "Bloostein!" but he did not look at her and continued tearing at his arms.

"Do you know him?" Lou asked her.

"It's Bloostein. I know him from the neighborhood."

"Where does he live?"

She thought for a minute but didn't know. "My father said he used to own a store on Second Avenue but he lost it. Then his Missus died and also his daughter was killed in a fire. Now he's got the seven years' itch and they can't cure it in the clinic. They say he peddles with light bulbs."

"Don't you know his address?"

"Not me. What did he do?"

"It doesn't matter what he tried to do," said Walter.

"Goodbye, Bloostein, I have to go to the schoolyard," the fat lady apologized. She picked up the basket and went with her pretzels down the bridge.

By now Bloostein had stopped his frantic scratching and lay quietly on the sidewalk. The sun shone straight into his eyes but he did nothing to shield them.

Lou, who was quite pale, looked at Walter and Walter said, "Let him go."

They got him up on his feet, dusted his coat and placed his dented hat on his head. Lou said he would get the bulbs out of the car but Walter said, "Not here, down at the foot of the bridge."

They helped Bloostein back to the car and in a few minutes let him go with his carton of bulbs at the foot of the bridge, not far from the place where they had first chanced to see him.

Bur that night, after their tour of duty, when Lou drove him home, Walter got out of the car and saw, after a moment of disbelief, that Bloostein himself was waiting for him in front of his house.

"Hey, Lou," he called, but Lou had already driven off so he had to face the peddler alone. Bloostein looked, with his carton of bulbs, much as he had that morning, except for the smudge where the dent on his derby hat had been, and his eyes were fleshy with fatigue.

"What do you want here?" Walter said to him.

The peddler parted his lips then pointed to his carton. "My little box lights."

"What about it?"

"What did you do with them?"

Walter thought a few seconds and remembered the other box of bulbs.

"You sure you haven't gone back and hid them somewhere?" he asked sternly.

Bloostein wouldn't look at him.

The policeman felt very hot. "All right, we'll try and locate them but first I have to have my supper. I'm hungry."

He went up the steps and turned to say

something more but a woman came out of the house and he raised his hat to her and went in.

After supper he would have liked very much to relax in front of the radio but instead he changed out of his uniform, said he was going to the corner, and walked, conscious of his heavy disappointment, down the stairs.

Bloostein was planted where he had left him.

"My car's in the garage." Walter went slowly up the street, Bloostein following with his carton of bulbs on his back.

At the garage Walter motioned him into the car. Bloostein lifted the carton into the back seat and got in with it. Walter drove out and over the bridge to Canal Street, to the place where they had taken the peddler into the police car.

He parked and went into three of the stores there, flashing his badge, and asking if anyone knew who had got the bulbs they had forgotten. No one knew for sure but the clerk in the third store thought it might be someone next door whose name and address he gave to Walter.

Before returning to the car Walter went into a tavern and had a few beers. Over the fourth he had a hunch and called the police property clerk, who said he had taken in no electric bulbs that day. Walter walked out and asked Bloostein how many bulbs he had had in the carton.

"Five dozen."

"At how much—wholesale?"

"Eight cents."

"That's four eighty," he figured. Taking a five-dollar bill from his wallet, he handed it to Bloostein who wouldn't accept it.

"What do you want, the purple heart?"

"My little box lights."

Walter then kidded, "Now you're gonna take a little ride."

They then rode to the address he had been given but no one knew where the one who had the bulbs was. Finally a bald-headed, stocky man in an undershirt came down from the top floor and said he was the man's uncle and what did Walter want.

Walter convinced him it wasn't serious. "It's just that he happens to know where these bulbs are that we left behind by mistake after an arrest."

The uncle said if it were not really serious he would give him the address of the social club where he could find his nephew. The address was a lot further uptown and on the East Side.

"This is foolish," Walter said to himself as he came out of the house. He thought maybe he could take his time and Bloostein might go away, so he stopped at another beer parlor and had several more as he watched a ten-round fight on television.

He came out sweaty from the beers.

But Bloostein was there.

Walter scratched under his arm. "What's good for an itch?" he said. When he got into the car he thought he was a little bit drunk but it didn't bother him and he drove to the social club on the East Side, where a dance was going on. He asked the ticket-taker in a tuxedo if this nephew was around.

The ticket-taker, whose right eye was very crossed, assured him that nobody by the name mentioned was there.

"It's really not very important," Walter said. "Just about a small carton bulbs he happens to be holding for this old geezer outside."

"I wouldn't know anything about it."

"It's nothing to worry about."

Walter stood by the door a few minutes and watched the dancers but there was no one whose face he could recognize.

"He's really not there."

"I don't doubt your word."

Afterwards he said it was a nice dance but he had to leave.

"Stay awhile," said the ticket-taker.

"I have to go," said Walter. "I have a date with a back-seat driver." The ticket-taker winked with his good eye, which had a comical effect, but Walter didn't smile and soon he left.

"Still here, Kid?" he asked Bloostein.

HE STARTED the car and drove back to Sixth Avenue, where he stopped at a

liquor store and bought himself a fifth of whiskey. In the car he tore the wrapper off the bottle and took a long pull.

"Drink?" He offered the bottle to Bloostein.

Bloostein was perched like a skinny owl on the back seat gazing at him.

Walter capped the bottle but did not start the car. He sat for a long time at the wheel, moodily meditating. At the point where he was beginning to feel down in the dumps, he got a sudden idea. The idea was so simple and good he quickly started the motor and drove downtown straight to Canal, where there was a hardware store that stayed open to midnight. He almost ran into the place and in ten minutes came out with a wrapped carton containing five dozen sixty-watt bulbs.

"The joy ride's finished, my friend."

The peddler got out and Walter unloaded the large carton and left it standing on the sidewalk near the smaller one.

He drove off quickly.

GOING over the bridge he felt relieved, yet at the same time a little anxious to get to sleep because he had to be up at six. He garaged the car and then walked home and upstairs, taking care to move about softly in the bathroom so as not to awaken his son, a light sleeper, nor his wife, who slept heavily but couldn't get back to sleep once she had been waked up. Undressing, he got into bed with her, but though the night was hot he felt like a cake of ice covered with a sheet. After a while he got up, raised the shade and stood by the window.

The quiet street was drenched in moonlight, and warm dark shadows fell from the tender trees. But in the tree shadow in front of the house were two strange oblongs and a gnarled, grotesque-hatted silhouette that stretched a tormented distance down the block. Walter's heart pounded heavily for he knew it was Bloostein.

He put on his robe and straw slippers and ran down the stairs.

"What's wrong?"

Bloostein stared at the moonlit sidewalk.

"What do you want?"

"..."

"You better go, Bloostein. This is too late for monkey business. You got your bulbs. Now you better just go home and leave me alone. I hate to have to call the police. Just go home."

Then he lumbered up the stone steps and the flight of carpeted stairs. Inside the bedroom he could hear his son moan in his sleep. Walter lay down and slept but was awakened by the sound of soft rain. Getting up, he stared out. There was the peddler in the rain, with his white upraised face looking at the window, so near he might be standing on stilts.

Hastening into the hall, Walter rummaged in a closet there for an umbrella but couldn't find one. Then his wife woke and called in a loud whisper, "Who's there?" He stood motionless and she listened a minute and evidently went back to sleep. Then because he couldn't find the umbrella he got out a light summer blanket, brought it into the little storage room next to the bedroom, and taking the screen out of the window, threw the blanket out to Bloostein so he wouldn't get too wet. The white blanket seemed to float down.

HE RETURNED to bed, by an effort of the will keeping himself there for hours. Then he noticed that the rain had stopped and he got up to make sure. The blanket lay heaped where it had fallen on the side-

walk. Bloostein was standing away from it, under the tree.

Walter's straw slippers squeaked as he walked down the stairs. The heat had broken and now a breeze came through the street, shivering the leaves in summer cold.

In the doorway he thought, what's my hurry? I can wait him out till six, then just let the mummy try to follow me into the station house.

"Bloostein," he said, going down the steps, but as the old man looked up, he felt a sickening emptiness.

Staring down at the sidewalk he thought about everything. At last he raised his head and slowly said, "Bloostein, I owe you an apology. I'm really sorry the whole thing happened. I haven't been able to sleep. From my heart I'm truly sorry."

Bloostein gazed at him with enormous eyes reflecting the moon. He answered nothing but it seemed he had shrunk and so had his shadow.

Walter said good night. He went up and lay down under the sheet.

"What's the matter?" said his wife.

"Nothing."

She turned over on her side.

"Don't wake Sonny."

"No."

He rose and went to the window. Raising the shade, he stared out. Yes, gone. He, his boxes of lights and soft summer blanket. He looked again but the long, moon-whitened street had never been so empty.

1,001 NIGHTS IN THE YIDDISH THEATER

From Goldfaden to Thomashefsky

WILLIAM AND SARAH SCHACK

IN THE summer of 1882, the first performance of a Yiddish play in this country—Abraham Goldfaden's *Koldunya*, sometimes titled *Die Bube Yachne* ("The Witch")—was given at the Turn Hall on East 4th Street in New York City. If this première was a nightmare to the actors and audience, it was nevertheless a historic event—second in importance only to that earlier première, in the fall of 1876 in Jassy, Rumania, when the same author started the first Yiddish theater in the world.

It should be remembered that Jewish tradition frowned on drama as a frivolity. So far as we know, there had never been a Hebrew theater in Palestine in all its long history, nor a Jewish theater in any language of the Diaspora. Even some forty years after the production in Turn Hall, when the Yiddish theater was already—though prematurely—spoken of as "dead," there were diehards who still opposed its having been at all. A friend of ours recalls her appearance in a He-

brew school production of a Purim play during the 1920's. In the audience was the girl's mother, a keen, hard-bitten Puritan who when her daughter came on the stage rose up and cried out: "*Lollke, mach zich nit narish—geh arup fun der bienel!*"—"Don't make a fool of yourself—get off the stage!"

Why did she do this? The play celebrated one of the few events in Jewish history that can be an occasion for rejoicing, the rescue of the Persian Jewish community in the 5th century BCE; and traditionally the Purim play was the only semi-formal secular entertainment Jews permitted themselves. The Talmud expressly states that on Purim you are even allowed to get so drunk as to bless Haman, the would-be destroyer of the Jews, and curse Mordecai, their savior. Our friend's mother knew all that. Yet for *her* daughter to take part in the celebration *as a performer on a public stage*—that was a disgrace. The stage was for low-life *komediantchikes*—all actors were comedians to her—and in the old country women did not participate even in Purim plays: jesters, choir boys, musicians, and lads eager to get away from the grind of the Yeshiva made up the cast of characters, playing the women's roles also (in masks, as men did in the Greek and still do in the Chinese theater).

It took us ten years to persuade this one Jewish mother to look in on the professional Yiddish theater, and even then she went with the utmost reluctance. We knew better than to expose her to the popular musicals, but we felt she would enjoy a good *lebensbild*—a "picture of life," which in the Yiddish theater was never a piece of raw naturalism but always a sentimental tragi-comedy. Years after she saw the play *Die Ebighe Mame* ("The Eternal Mother"), in which her own real and imaginary sorrows were reflected, she still spoke of it with profound respect.

THE Yiddish theater—fountainhead of truth and poetry, swamp of cultural decay, or den of iniquity, depending on your point of view—emerged from the bubbling caldron of the Enlightenment in the last quarter of the 19th century, and, for better or worse, has been with us ever since. WILLIAM and SARAH SCHACK here tell the story of the early days of this Jewish child which seems, unhappily, to be passing into senescence without having enjoyed any substantial period of maturity. From 1929 to 1939 Mr. Schack was reviewer of Yiddish drama for the *New York Times*. He is a frequent contributor to art magazines, and the author of a biography of the painter Eilshemius. His article "The Ordeal of Arnold Friedman, Painter" appeared in the January 1950 COMMENTARY. Mrs. Schack collaborates with her husband in much of his writing, and is herself a contributor on Jewish subjects to numerous periodicals. She was co-collector and editor of *Yiddish Folk Songs* (1927).

Yet she never recanted her opinion that the theater was a place of unseemly frivolity and that attending it was on a par with habitual card-playing.

THAT is very much what her remote ancestors seem to have felt. During Roman rule over Palestine, Hellenist Jews wished to imitate the circus entertainments of their conquerors (who had already created a "stage Jew"), but public opinion was against them. One of their number wrote a play in Greek about the Exodus, but there is no record of its having been produced. A Jewish actor named Aliturus was a favorite of Emperor Nero and his wife, but one Jew talking Latin does not make a Jewish theater.

From the beginning of the Exile, the annual Purim play was all the theater the Jews knew. At various times and places, it was given in the synagogue or its courtyard (where Haman could be safely burned in effigy), in the streets, or in the homes of the well-to-do, which were often visited by troupe after troupe of strolling players performing for whatever payment was voluntarily offered. At one time, in Frankfort, there was a Purim company that had a four-week season—two weeks before and two after the holiday.

Beginning with pantomime, high spirits, and ad-libbing, the plays gradually acquired formalized dialogue. A complete dramatic text on the story of Ahasuerus is known to have existed by the 10th century. Other Biblical subjects, especially the Joseph story, were also used as themes for Purim plays. In time, irrelevant comic relief was written into otherwise sober history. One Pickleherring (the equivalent of the German "Hanswurst") made his appearance in some early 17th-century works written in what we now call *deitshmerish*—a kind of would-be-German Yiddish. Finally, there were plays that corrupted the Biblical stories for the sake of laughs. By the end of the 17th century, when the celebration of Purim had taken on the coloration of the Italian and German carnivals, at least one Purim play was so bawdy that the leaders of Frankfort Jewry burned it in a public bonfire. Yet there were

many among the lower classes who enjoyed the lighter touch, even if it was often heavy-handed. Daily life was a long drudgery and the Law allowed little time for kicking over the traces except on Simchas Torah and a few other holidays. So on this one day of the year when a real live play was part of the entertainment, they might well have thought: Esther-shmester, let's have a good rowdy farce and let history go hang! The audience for the first Yiddish theater was in the making.

THE movement toward the establishment of the theater itself had its source on a higher plane. It was a phase of the Haskalah, the movement of enlightenment (to the Orthodox, of heresy) which brought Western culture to the Jews of Europe toward the end of the 18th century. In the Latin countries there had already been a trend in that direction: in the previous century Lope de Vega and Racine had been translated into Hebrew, and in the early 18th century Moses Hayim Luzzatto had written plays in Italy and Jose da Silva in Portugal (Silva was burned at the stake while one of his operettas was being given in Lisbon). But in the late 18th century the tendency was toward the Yiddish. The men of the Haskalah, especially in Central Europe, despised Yiddish as a jargon and sought expression in the European languages and Hebrew; but in Eastern Europe, although several authors wrote plays in German, Russian, and Hebrew, many felt that it was also important to reach the masses in their own tongue. Solomon Ettinger's *Serkele* (1825-26), A. B. Gottlober's *Der Tektuch* ("The Marriage Veil," 1838), and the dramatic dialogues written by Israel Axenfeld "to be read on a winter's night," circulated from hand to hand for a generation before they were published, generally in garbled form and sometimes without the author's name. (*Serkele* was first printed in 1861, in Johannesburg, South Africa!) Even as closet works they played a large part in creating an interest in the theater, and as mediums of propaganda for the Enlightenment they had a serious content such as was generally lack-

ing in the first plays produced for the box office. *Serkele*, for instance, though enveloped in a structure of melodrama, aimed to give an essentially truthful and serious picture of a kind of Jewish family that was commonly treated as a subject for sentimental humor. Its theme was the henpecked husband and the wife who made the family's living, but the husband was not the stereotyped image of abjectness, and *Serkele* was not just a shrew with a heart of gold: she was a more real and more menacing figure, sharp to her husband, brutal to her brother's child, and eventually capable of forging a will to get hold of her brother's fortune.

A parallel influence, this one of folk origin, came from *brodersinger*, wine-cellar entertainers, who effected the actual transition to the stage proper. The *brodersinger* themselves, who appeared on the scene around 1850, grew out of the *badchonim*, minstrels who were employed to enliven weddings and other festive gatherings, chanting rhymed couplets wishing the bride and groom good health and plenty of children, offering sound, trite advice, and otherwise entertaining the company with their clowning and naive moralizing. Eliakum Zunser, the most famous of all *badchonim*, was a folk poet, a composer, and an ardent exponent of both Zionism and the Enlightenment. Zunser also wrote material for the minstrels of Brody, a town in Galicia which was a convenient stopover for business men traveling between Germany and Russia. To meet the travelers' demand for entertainment, a more sophisticated type of entertainer arose, taking his cue from the performers in the non-Jewish cafés. From the name of the town, these new minstrels came to be called *brodersinger*. Beginning with simple amusing ditties, the *brodersinger* later created songs in the true folk spirit—songs of rich and poor, of work and love. With a couple of boards placed on beer kegs, they would set up a stage on which to present character types—the peasant, the thief, the tailor, the soldier, the water-carrier, the Hasid—with costumes, crude makeup, and half-improvised monologues. Spicing their skits with the progressive, secularist

ideas of the Enlightenment, the *brodersinger* contributed much to winning over the masses to that movement—perhaps as much as all the self-conscious preaching of its leaders.

So popular were Berel Brody and others of the school that in a generation they were emulated throughout Galicia, Rumania, and Russia. A Velvel Zbarzher became famous writing for them and Abraham Goldfaden, too, was among those who supplied them with material. Indeed, the *brodersinger* constituted a Yiddish theater in miniature, and they—along with the choir boys who used to sing and do impersonations at parties—were the first source of acting talent Goldfaden had to draw on. The circumstances were ripe for the birth of the professional theater, and Goldfaden was the right man to officiate at the delivery.

ABRAHAM GOLDFADEN was born in Staro-Konstantin, Southern Russia, in 1840, the son of a watchmaker. Though he was without musical training, he began to compose verse as a boy, and first became acquainted with the *brodersinger* through Nachman Broder, a fellow apprentice of his father. After receiving a good traditional Jewish education, young Goldfaden wanted to supplement it with the new Western learning. Abandoning his father's trade, he went off to the *rabbinershule* in Zhitomir—one of the numerous schools the government had set up as part of its Russification program; these schools attracted many bright and ambitious boys eager to acquire European culture and at the same time escape onerous military service. In Zhitomir, the young man at once showed his adaptability by Germanizing his family name, Goldenfodim, to Goldenfaden, and, in a second refinement, to Goldfaden. He had his first taste of the stage when he played the title role in a student production of Ettinger's *Serkele*, which was very well received. His verse in both Hebrew and Yiddish was being printed in the magazines, and was popular enough to warrant publication in two separate books, one in each language.

Graduating at the age of twenty-six, Gold-

faden taught school for a year, then went in for gay living at the expense of a rich uncle in Odessa who expected him to marry his daughter. The curtain soon fell on that scene; Goldfaden married the daughter of the Hebrew poet Eliyahu M. Werbel, and reluctantly began to teach again. But he continued steadily to write verse and dramatic sketches which he read to responsive audiences of Odessa intellectuals. Again escaping from the confinement of the classroom, he became cashier in a millinery store, and later set up in that business for himself. His establishment grew bigger and bigger and proved to be excellent training for the future theatrical producer: he went bankrupt for some eighty thousand rubles!

Goldfaden next decided to study medicine in Munich, but before getting as far as an anatomy book he changed his mind and became publisher of a Yiddish weekly in Lemberg. There he was able to attend plays, operas, and operettas given in several languages. His magazine failed. He set up another in Czernowitz, and that went under too. Meanwhile he kept moving nearer to the stage; he had been in close touch with several of the *brodersinger*, who performed some of his works, and a miscellany of his verse and prose published in 1869 under the title *Die Yiddene* included a comedy, *Die Mume Sosia* ("Aunt Sosia").

When the suggestion was made of starting a European-style theater in Yiddish, Goldfaden took it up enthusiastically: "We'll shovel in the napoleons," he declared. The theater would give him the excitement he craved and the fame his talent deserved. Also, it would allow him to preach against the old fanaticism and superstitions and spread the ideas of the Enlightenment—though this, one feels sure, was quite a secondary consideration.

Now he was ready to start a theater. But where was the play? If he had entertained any idea of putting on a straight comedy like *Die Mume Sosia* or writing a new serious drama modeled perhaps on *Serkele*, he changed his mind when, shortly before he was to begin work on his first production, he

appeared on the stage of Shimon Mark's Garden in Jassy, where his friend Israel Gradner, a *brodersinger*, performed. Goldfaden had gone to Jassy to try to publish still another periodical, and Gradner had invited him to declaim some of the works which had given him a reputation as a folk poet. Goldfaden recited, as he thought, "loudly, pleasantly, with ecstasy," but the audience was cold: they had expected the elegant gentleman to crack jokes or perform magic tricks, like pulling red ribbons out of his nose. The evening would have been a complete failure if Gradner had not taken the stage in costume to do a Hasidic song and dance. The hearty applause this received convinced Goldfaden that if he was to make a success of the theater he would have to cater to the mob.

In Mark's Garden, Goldfaden put on his first production, with Gradner playing the role of a Hasid, Sachar Goldstein (another *brodersinger*) doubling as the Hasid's wife and a young boy, and probably a third actor, who remains anonymous. Goldfaden expanded a few of his songs, strung them together, added a few dances, and concocted an inept triangle as a plot to unite them in two acts, for better or for worse. He didn't trouble to write out any dialogue (*proseh*, as they grandly called it), but let the actors improvise. "All they had to know," Goldfaden wrote later, "was when to kiss, when to quarrel, and when to make up and go into a dance." In polite academic language, the result was a kind of *commedia dell'arte*; in Goldfaden's own words, "it was a *mishmash*, a noisy hash, a senseless thing, the name of which I don't even remember."

This historic event took place early in October of 1876; and the play, the production, the senseless thing—whatever it may be called—lasted exactly two performances.

GOLDFADEN was not discouraged; he went off to try his luck in Batushan. Recruiting for the Rumanian army was going on there and they weren't particular about whom they pressed into service. Goldfaden hid in an attic and wrote a farce called *Rekruten*. When the coast was clear, he pro-

duced it, filling out the cast with real soldiers on leave. Bad weather kept the customers away and Goldfaden, unable to pay his bills, had to leave his "company" at an inn as hostages while he sought fortune in Galatz. In the inn there he set up a stage, prepared the scenery, and around Purim time successfully presented *Rekruten* for eight or ten performances.

Goldfaden now felt impelled to do a serious drama and wrote *Dvoshe die Plyotkemacherin* ("Dvoshe the Scandalmonger"), but not without interpolating two comic songs and a translation of some popular couplets from an operetta by Lecocq. When he came to cast it, tentatively, he had Gradner for one part and Goldstein for another. A third role was assigned to "we shall see" and two more to "someone from the street." Gossip had it that he dragged young fellows out of "forbidden streets" to round out his cast. . . .

But it was not long before there were willing actors all over the Jewish towns—these, aside from the *brodersinger*. They came from among the choir boys who used to sing and do impersonations at parties, from Purim players and stage-struck youngsters who had never seen a stage and didn't mind missing a few meals. The first actress—not a masked man, but a real woman—stirred up as much passion as a lone female at an army post. Sarah Siegel, a seamstress, was Goldfaden's discovery. She had romantic notions about the stage, but her mother wouldn't let her realize them until she was safely married; Goldstein was available. . . . Soon there were plenty of willing and less cautious actresses: wives, cousins, sisters of the male actors, and other young girls looking for the exciting life of strolling players, and possibly even for husbands.

WITHIN a few months of its birth, the Yiddish theater was in ferment. Actors became rebellious; new companies were formed; old companies disbanded. It all began when Goldfaden moved to Bucharest. There, in the home of the famous cantor Israel Cooper, he discovered Sigmund Mogulesko, a young choir boy who had been offer-

ed a scholarship by the local conservatory of music to study in Italy but had turned it down because it was conditional on his being converted. Mogulesko was spirited enough to join the precarious new venture. He was not only a good musician—people called him *der notenfresser*, "the note-eater"—but also proved to be a fine actor. He is still generally considered to have been the greatest the Yiddish theater produced. Mogulesko made such a hit in his very first role in Goldfaden's new play, *Shmendrik* (or "The Ridiculous Wedding") that Gradner became sick with jealousy and left the company. He went to Jassy and there set up a second company. But he needed another good actor, and so he lured his rival, Mogulesko, away from Goldfaden. Meanwhile the self-styled "Professor" Ish Hurwitch began to compete with the father of the Yiddish theater in Bucharest. Goldfaden drove Hurwitch into bankruptcy by stealing his best actor, Abba Shoengold; Hurwitch then took to the road and met up with Gradner; they decided to join forces against Goldfaden, and returned to Bucharest. As partners they fought more bitterly than if they had been competitors: there was a saying that if you saw two top hats rolling in the gutter you could be sure they belonged to Gradner and Hurwitch.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877 brought heavy war contracts to Rumania, and there was so much easy money around that it even flowed into the Yiddish theater. This prosperity stimulated the formation and re-formation of more stage companies all through the Jewish sections of Russia and Rumania. There were companies; there were actresses; there were even playwrights. In most cases, this meant simply that a fledgling manager, having hired a hall, sat down to write a free version of some play by Goldfaden or a foreign author that he had seen, or even that he had merely heard of. Joseph Lateiner wrote the first new vehicle for the Gradner-Mogulesko combine, *Yente die Pipernoterin* ("Yente the Viper"), following it up with an endless series of works in which, to paraphrase the first historian of the Yiddish theater, B. Gorin, there is no relation between

one act and the next, or between one character and another, and no consistency in any character from one moment to the following. In effect, Lateiner wrote three plays for each of the three audiences he assumed to be present in every audience—how the three plays became one was no concern of his. “Professor” Hurwitch was equally facile in grinding out trashy melodramas. And in Odessa, Nahum Meir Shaikewitz-Shomer, famous first as a writer of realistic tales and then of extravagant romances, soon made the *lebensbild* his specialty for his own theater.

There were other playwrights too, but Goldfaden remained the dominant figure. Not content to be only manager, director, composer, scene designer, *entr’acte* entertainer, occasional actor, and prompter, he also wrote steadily. In the sum of all his capacities, he was apparently so difficult to work with that, as his wife once remarked, if he had not supplied the plays they would have thrown him out of the theater altogether. But he did turn out plays, encouraged by intermittent financial success. In Odessa, to which he brought a company of forty-two persons (including dependents and creditors), he made such a hit that he was able to rent magnificent quarters and, like the pope, post a Swiss guard at his door to keep out unwanted callers (including actors). And his actors, too, took over half a suburban resort, with boats of their own and their own carriages to bring them to town.

TO KEEP his company (and others) going, Goldfaden wrote some forty plays and sketches: farce, melodrama, semi-serious realistic drama, historical and pseudo-historical works—all embellished with music. He stole from the German, French, Russian, Rumanian, and heaven knows what other languages. His songs were based on or directly borrowed from synagogue chants, from compositions of Mogulesko, from the operettas of Offenbach and Lecocq, from the operas of Meyerbeer, Verdi, and even Wagner, from Gypsy, Turkish, Rumanian, and Ukrainian folk songs. Yet he often managed to give foreign musical idioms a Jewish and sometimes even a per-

sonal accent, just as he created some authentic Jewish character types by drawing on the details of the unique social life of the Jews. This fund of realistic observation is the leaven of his deliberately dilute works as well as of his more ambitious ones. It ran through everything: *Ix Mix Drix*; *Todros Bloz*; *Nie Beh Nie Meh Nie Kukerikoo* (or “The Struggle between Education and Fanaticism”); *Kabtzensohn et (sic) Hungerman* (or “The Capricious Bride”); *Die Tsvai Kune Lemels* (or “The Fanatic”); *Das Tsente Gebot* (“The Tenth Commandment”); *Doktor Almasado*; *Bar Kochba* (or “The Last Days of Jerusalem”); *Shulamit* (or “The Daughter of Jerusalem”), etc.

Several of Goldfaden’s works—and not only the “serious” ones—were considered good enough in their time to be translated into many languages for production. As late as the 1930’s they were still being adapted by various top-flight troupes the world over. They are only given occasionally on New York’s Second Avenue now, mainly for special memorials, but their influence in the popular theater is still very strong.

After the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, successive restrictions were placed on the Yiddish theater, and its performances were completely banned two years later. While this may have been simply a part of the general anti-Semitic repression, it has also been given more specific interpretation: according to one view, the government imposed the ban because an informer said that *Bar Kochba* contained veiled subversive references, suggesting the uprising of the ancient Hebrews against their Roman conquerors as an example for their descendants. Others believe that Orthodox Jews, together with partly assimilated rich or intellectual Jews, felt that Goldfaden’s works were giving their people a bad name and therefore persuaded the government to take the action it did.

While public theaters were closed by law, it was discovered after a while that “literary clubs” might produce plays for their members if they were in German; so Yiddish dramas were given in “German”—that is, all the “aw’s” became “ah’s”: a *nawz* became a *naz*.

But meanwhile most of the Yiddish actors and manager-playwrights had begun to migrate westward, stopping in Austrian Galicia, Rumania, France, and England, and then going finally to the United States.

THERE are contradictory accounts of the events leading up to the first Yiddish production in New York, and of the performance itself. We follow the account of Boris Thomashefsky, who was a prime mover in the affair, because it is the most complete, even if probably embroidered by memory and temperament.

Thomashefsky was only sixteen years old at the time, having arrived in the wave of immigration immediately following the pogroms of 1881. In the old country he had been in the choir of a famous cantor, learned a good many of Goldfaden's songs outside the walls of the synagogue, and had seen his first Yiddish play with Mogulesko in the lead. In New York the handsome youngster was earning his living in a cigarette factory on Chatham Square, where his fellow workers used to lighten their labors by singing the old folk songs and the newer Goldfaden ditties such as *Bobkelach* ("Little Beans"), *Bristelach* ("Little Breasts"), and *Oi Veh, Dalles* (freely—"Alas, No Dollars"). Someone in the group would enliven his interpretation with gestures; a man who had once been a "super" in Russia offered his criticism—and there was the nucleus of a company.

But for all their enthusiasm, they had little knowledge of the theater, whether as a business or an art, and they weren't quite bold enough to start a company on their own. One of the cigarette-rollers, Abraham Golobuck, knew where there was a company ready-made: two of his brothers, Leon and Myron, were starring in a London company and enjoying a great success in Goldfaden's *Koldunya* (Golobuck didn't say, if he knew, that it was only a *succès d'estime*—if it was even that). Thomashefsky agreed that they were just the people to start the theater in New York. The only question was where to get the money to pay for their transportation. This problem was soon solved. In the Henry

Street synagogue, where he sang in the Sabbath service, Thomashefsky met Frank Wolf, owner of a popular saloon on the Bowery known as *The Workingman's Friend*, and laid the situation before him. Business was good with Frank Wolf, and he liked the idea of a Yiddish theater; one day he bought eight steamship tickets, London to New York. When the troupers, plus several children, arrived at Castle Garden a few weeks later, they were taken straight to Wolf's saloon.

THE Golobucks' first thought was to outfit themselves with top hats and high-heeled shoes: their prospective customers had to be shown what elegant gentry Yiddish actors were. A rehearsal hall was rented on Hester Street. The choristers of several synagogues were recruited to form one grand augmented chorus. Preparations went forward well enough to justify the hiring of Turn Hall for the performance. With the eldest Golobuck as chief promoter and Thomashefsky as his assistant, tickets began to move. And then they received a summons.

It was not from the police, but from a committee—a committee of Americanized Jews who, regarding themselves as the spiritual wardens of the new immigrants, had looked into their proposed theatrical venture and found it evil. It was bad enough that the play was written in outlandish jargon—that is, in Yiddish. What was more serious was its immorality. The leading character of *Koldunya*, Bube Yachne, is a fortune teller secretly engaged in more nefarious activities. Having arranged the marriage of a confederate to a rich man, she proceeds to frame him with the police in order to get hold of his business and his money. This involves abducting his daughter, selling her into slavery in Constantinople, and then, when the girl is bought back by her fiancé, attempting to kill them both by burning down the inn in which they are staying. As comic relief, there is an odious peddler, Hotzmach, who short-changes his customers, and there are such awful songs as *Bristelach*, sung with evident double meaning by a butcher in the market place. Never mind that Bube Yachne

herself is killed in the fire—instead of her intended victims: this slapped-on moral ending could not excuse the fact that the monstrous story was presented as a *lebensbild*, a picture of Jewish life. Was this the kind of people to set before American eyes as representative Jews? The play ought not to be given, and it wouldn't be if the committee could help it.

The representatives of the poor, uncouth, and emotional East European Jews were intimidated by the spectacle of well-dressed authority speaking English without an accent, and departed meek and unhappy. But they were young and men of the theater; they recovered quickly from the scolding, and the show went ahead as scheduled.

The tickets, priced high, were eagerly bought up. On the evening of the performance such a crowd seethed around Turn Hall that the proprietor thought a riot was in the making and called out the police. Speakers popped up to assail the play, to urge people to boycott its production or break it up. But by 7:00 P.M. the hall was full.

Until the announced curtain time, eighty-three, the audience was patient. For another quarter of an hour, it kept the peace, amusing itself as it could. Nine o'clock, and the curtain billowed here and there but still trailed the floor. The audience began to stamp and shout. A representative of the management came on the stage to plead for more patience. Madam Kranzfeld, the prima donna, had been unavoidably detained, but she was expected any minute now. The orchestra would entertain them meanwhile. The orchestra played an overture, the cymbals clashed their final *tsing!*—and still no Madam Kranzfeld.

And where was she, this woman who after a career of two or three years had been billed in London as "the world-famous Yiddish Sarah Bernhardt"? A deputation from the theater went to investigate and found her in bed. Sick, said her husband. But a crowded house was waiting for her. Where was her sense of honor? Sick, Mr. Kranzfeld persisted, hinting also that the anti-theatrical committee was taking care of her,

of them. The deputation pleaded. Sorry, impossible for his wife to sing that night, said Mr. Kranzfeld—unless. Unless what? Unless they hand over three hundred dollars. The deputation cursed—and paid. Madam Kranzfeld found the strength to get up and dress, and she arrived at the hall at ten-fifteen.

The musicians had exhausted their repertory and gone home. Half the audience had left also. The prima donna at first balked at singing to an empty house, and unaccompanied, but at ten-thirty she gave in: the curtain went up.

Madam Kranzfeld sang; Thomashefsky sang; the brothers Golobuck carried on like the brothers Karamazov. But it was no use. Nothing was good enough for people who had lost three hours of their lives in uncomfortable seats. The evening ended—at an unrecorded hour—in catcalls and a rum-pus. The managers sneaked out by a back door. Those of the company who had jobs in the cigarette factory went back to their benches.

BUT, like Goldfaden's first venture, this was only a temporary setback. After three months the Golobucks got up enough courage to put on a repeat performance of *Koldunya*, and after that the climate became increasingly favorable to a theater. The continued stream of immigration augmented the audience, and the stage folk, after the closing of the Yiddish theaters in Russia, largely followed their audience to America.

The Atlantic crossing was hardly beneficial. Instead of improving on Goldfaden, the theaters that were established in New York sank to a lower level. Lateiner and Hurwitch, who arrived in 1884 and 1886, respectively, soon gained complete control of Yiddish show business, and remained the dominant managers for some fifteen years. Whatever companies came here from abroad, however they split and recombined, were mostly presenting plays by Hurwitch or Lateiner, *for* Hurwitch and Lateiner. (Mogulesko, however, used a good many of Shaikewitz-Shomer's works.)

When Goldfaden himself arrived in 1887, he couldn't find a place in the New York Yiddish theater. When, just off the boat, he insisted on taking over himself a performance of his play *Bar Kochba*, instead of accepting the role of honored guest, the actors walked out on him. A second cast was assembled, but the play failed and Goldfaden fled to the wilderness of the road. Faring badly there, he returned to New York, where he started an illustrated drama magazine, and organized an amateur theater to win new actor-disciples. There was not much of a living in this, so Goldfaden took ship for home. For fifteen years, home was Bucharest, Lemberg, Galatz, London, Paris . . . Home was wherever he found support. He found so little that a friend finally had to write urgently to the New York theater managers for help, and they staged a benefit performance which brought in some seven hundred dollars. Again, on his return to New York in 1903, they gave him a fitting *ehrenabend* (testimonial), but after that they left him to his own devices. He wrote verse, drew remotely on *Daniel Deronda* for his last Yiddish play, *Ben Ami*, dealing with an artist, and, despairing of its production, turned to the Hebrew of his youth. His one-act play about David—the first Hebrew play written in this country—was put on by an amateur troupe which enjoyed high prestige. But Goldfaden was destitute.

Pressure was brought to bear on the managers, who agreed to pay him five dollars a week each—"royalties," they called it, even though they were not often producing his work, at least not in acknowledged and recognizable form. When Thomashefsky at last decided to present *Ben Ami* toward the end of 1907, he insisted on embellishing it with songs, which the author claimed ruined it. After the first few performances, the play was clearly headed for failure. Then, on January 9, 1908, Goldfaden died. Tens of thousands attended the funeral; *Ben Ami* played for fourteen weeks—a phenomenal run for the time; and a great tombstone was set up in Washington Cemetery, Brooklyn, bearing the names of his best plays.

HURWITCH and Lateiner continued to borrow plots and music from all sources; to contrive melodramas as involved as possible; to put German into the mouths of their educated characters and *liebhaber* (lovers, as distinguished from ordinary couples who simply got married)—a device in which Goldfaden himself followed Ettinger; to exploit lameness, stammering, and other physical defects for purposes of comedy; to write parts to the specifications of the stars who were expected to put over a show; and, above all, to bear in mind that the audience was ignorant, illiterate, and simple-minded. Even today the catchword of the knowing ones is "*der oilem iz a goilem*" (without benefit of rhyme: "the public is a nitwit").

Everybody was a borrower, but Lateiner, he of the three-in-one plays, was particularly free in his adaptations. He thought nothing of converting an Irishman into a *shochet*, an Italian bandit into a Jewish poet. Hurwitch, for his part, had only his comic characters speak plain Yiddish—*kugelsprach*, he called it; the rest had to declaim in lofty German. And why not, when "Professor" Hurwitch, too busy with the box office to have the time or inclination to write *proseh*, turned to the masters on his library shelves for appropriate passages?

Thomashefsky, who became a manager-star many years after his debut, shuffled words and music together for many of his vehicles. His recipe was: a bit of comedy "to forget one's troubles"; a bit of tragedy about kings, lords, or other high personages, "to have a good cry"; a scattering of songs for every taste; something special for the women, say about husbands and wives; and, since all the world loves a lover, a young couple, wooing in the manner of "*du bist meiner, ich bin deiner, mir vellen zein a pohrele, aza yohrele*." When the taste for romantic historical plays passed, along with the youthful figures of the stars (Thomashefsky was famous for his thighs), Thomashefsky made them into contemporary homespun *lebensbilder* by transforming the dowager queen into a housekeeper, the prince into a pants-operator, the king into a presser.

On occasion, he and the other stars of the period—Jacob P. Adler and David Kessler—would produce the great theater classics or give a hearing to one of the serious Yiddish playwrights who finally came along—Jacob Gordin, Leon Kobrin, Abraham Shomer, David Pinski, Sholem Asch. . . . Toward the end of his career Thomashefsky had the spirit to sponsor the first tour in this country of the Vilna Troupe, which produced the kind of plays he would have liked to appear in, if only they had had as much box-office appeal as the concoctions that made his fortune. But the *ehrenpiesen*—the “art” plays—seldom made money, and when Shakespeare failed the manager went flying back to *shund* (“trash”). The character of the Yiddish theater had been set on a low level, and throughout its history it rarely managed to rise above its beginnings.

TO BE sure, the crudities of the early Yiddish stage were not unique. Their counterparts existed at the beginning of every sort of theater in other countries. What makes the primitiveness of Goldfaden and his immediate successors more striking is simply the fact that their theater came into being so late, and in the midst of an already highly developed theatrical tradition all around it.

There is no denying, also, that the larger audience which the Yiddish playwrights first tried to reach would not have been receptive to subtle art. Generally speaking, the audience was as ignorant and naive as Goldfaden thought it. Its members may have had plenty of common sense outside the theater, but they had no standards by which to judge what happened behind footlights. They confused reality and make-believe; the folklore of the Yiddish theater is full of anecdotes revolving around this confusion. For instance, there was the old woman who cried out to a bearded, white-haired character (played by a young

man): “Hey, you old Methuselah, aren’t you ashamed to make a fool of yourself at your age? Pfui on you!”

Just as they confused make-believe with reality, so they also confused one make-believe with another: it was all the same. There is the story of a woman who pushed her way through the crowded lobby of a Second Avenue theater with several children stringing behind her, only to be told by the doorman that she was in the wrong place.

“This is Second Avenue, lady; your tickets are for a theater on the Bowery.”

“So what should I do—go drag the children to the Bowery? What’s the difference this theater, that theater! Do I come for pleasure? It’s for my *landsman* a benefit!”

When does one go to the Yiddish theater? When there’s a benefit. Hardly the attitude of people with a serious interest in the theater. And the early playgoers, lacking aesthetic experience, wanted only simple, relaxed entertainment—a good laugh, a good cry. Therefore, although the theater was a product of the Enlightenment and one of its vehicles, the more serious values expressed in the work of the non-theatrical writers of the Enlightenment found little expression on the Yiddish stage for nearly a quarter of a century. But the day was to come when a Leon Kobrin would try to picture life as it was, and a Jacob Gordin would adapt the new intellectual plays from the European stage. The critical audience was still small when Perez Hirshbein, in 1908, organized a company in Odessa to present plays to meet its more exacting demands. But this audience grew in numbers—in Russia, in Poland, and in our own country—and for it were created the plays of Sholem Asch, Perez Hirshbein, David Pinski, Ossip Dymow, Harry Sackler, H. Leivick, and other serious writers. For a short time the Yiddish theater did achieve a flowering; but that is another chapter in its history.

FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FAMILY FORTUNE

From Worker to Foreman

CHARLES REZNIKOFF

BROWNSVILLE is now well within the city of New York. The subway runs through Brownsville; it has at least a hundred streets and all are paved; almost all the houses are of brick. Then it was only a wooden village with a few muddy streets that, east, west, and south, led to the fields and marshes of Brooklyn. The people of Brownsville—as they still are—were mostly Jews. At that time, in 1895 or so, they were almost all immigrants, just come from Russia. Young and strong, for the most part, they held their heads high and felt themselves beneath no one, although their own work was humble. But, if they thought themselves the equal of anyone, they thought everyone their equal, and called all men brothers.

My father then was young, too; thin, neither tall nor short; with brown hair and mustache and pale face; in fact, he was rather good-looking. My mother was tall for a woman and strong. Her face was round and her skin somewhat dark, her cheeks ruddy and her cheekbones somewhat high, her nose short; her eyes, like her hair, were dark brown, and bright. But her eyesight was none too good, for she had been earning her living as a seamstress ever since she was little. Her photographs showed her rather homely—and this was always a surprise to those who knew her winsome face.

In recording the early struggles and triumphs of his father in the days when he worked as foreman of a shop making "ladies' wrappers," CHARLES REZNIKOFF tells a story that thousands of American Jewish families will recognize as their own. Mr. Reznikoff has published works of poetry, fiction, and history.

As for me, I was an ugly baby—to judge from the photograph my mother kept as precious—with head too large for my body. A visitor, who saw me crawling about the floor ready to catch at the wheel of my father's sewing machine, called me, to my mother's vexation, "a spider." (My mother spoke of it with bitterness when the man who had said it was long dead and buried.)

For two or three years my father had been earning his living as a sewing-machine operator, working from six, or earlier, in the morning until eight, or later, at night, every day except Saturday. My father did not think the hours long. When he began work as an operator, he had to work every day and every night, except Friday night (when the Sabbath begins), until ten. Then he was sewing "knee-pants" for boys, out of cloth that had been used for men's trousers, dusty cloth, still smelling of sweat and the damp cellar in which the bundles of old trousers had been stored. But now he was sewing "ladies'" wrappers out of clean new goods.

My father's sewing machine with a new treadle that helped him sew faster belonged to him, and he worked at home. My mother's sewing machine was there, too. If there was more than enough to do, the daughter of a neighbor or, perhaps, a tailor out of work brought in another sewing machine and sewed with my parents. They worked for a manufacturer in Manhattan whose prices for sewing were a little better than those paid by others. But Henry Ettelson's wrappers had to be carefully made. The cloth, of many kinds and colors, was cut in his place according to his patterns, and the bundles to be sewn into wrappers sent out to Brownsville by wagon.

ONE day, when my father brought back the wrappers he had made, he saw Ettelson together with the designer and forewoman in the showroom. The three were arguing about a wrapper on the figure. (The forewoman was in charge of the contractors including those, like my father, who sewed at home and hardly had the dignity of a contractor.) My father stood in the outer office, waiting for the forewoman to examine the wrappers he had brought, when the designer caught sight of him through the open door. "Come in here!" he called.

My father walked gingerly upon the carpet of the showroom, well aware of his muddy shoes, for Brownsville was a muddy place. "Here is a man who understands his work," said the designer. "You will admit that," he added, looking at the forewoman. She nodded stiffly, her face flushed with anger. (Unlike her employer and the designer, she was not Jewish.) "All right," went on the designer, "let us ask him how he thinks this wrapper should be made."

Ettelson, who had been looking closely at the wrapper on the figure, turned to look at my father. "How would *you* go about 'setting in' the yoke with goods like this?" he cried in his shrill voice.

My father was pleased, of course, to hear himself praised and to have his opinion asked but he tried to keep from smiling. He fingered the goods thoughtfully. Then, speaking slowly and in a low voice, he showed them how he would "set in" the yoke. This was just how the designer had been telling the forewoman to have it done by the operators and, when she would not, he had asked Ettelson to settle their quarrel.

"All right," said Ettelson, after my father had explained why that kind of goods had to be sewn his way, and turning to the forewoman said: "Do it like that, please."

But the forewoman answered: "I am through here."

The designer smiled. And Ettelson put him in charge—at once—of the operators and the contractors.

Now my father hoped to have plenty to do. Things could not have turned out better, he thought. But the times became worse and the designer, for all his friendliness, could only send my father one bundle a week; and there was no work at all to be had elsewhere. One bundle a week was not enough for a

man, let alone a man with a wife and baby. Besides, my parents had a neighbor who was out of work and they felt that they ought to share the single bundle. The three used to sew it at night and, during the day, my father and his neighbor looked for work. They found some at last in a shop making "sailor suits" for boys, but neither could earn more than three dollars a week. Times were really very bad.

In the spring business was better and my father had plenty to do sewing wrappers for Henry Ettelson. But his happiness did not last long: he heard that Ettelson was going to have sewing machines run by electricity. Other manufacturers of wrappers were fixing up such shops for themselves, and Ettelson, if he was to stay in business, had to have one, too. Now, my father thought, Ettelson will probably have no work at all made outside; for a sewing machine run by electricity could turn out wrappers faster and cheaper than a man working any kind of treadle by foot. At best, Ettelson's shop would make the most profitable work during the season, and all his work in the slack.

My father knew the man who was to be Ettelson's foreman. He was a contractor of wrappers who had as many as twelve operators working for him, and the work of his shop was as good as my father's. The two had often met in Ettelson's place and were friendly. My father was willing to be his helper for as little as ten dollars a week. The man cheerfully promised to hire my father but, when the shop was ready and he became the foreman, he hired his brother-in-law instead.

However, he was not able to run Ettelson's shop. A great deal of goods was spoiled by the help and Ettelson had to let those who worked outside make the better grade of wrappers. My father had never earned as much before and that season made about twenty dollars a week. Everybody in the trade was now saying it was the foreman's wife who had run the contracting business so well. When the season was over, Ettelson let the man go and asked my father to be the foreman at fifteen dollars a week.

Now that my father was offered the job of foreman, after he had been willing to be merely a helper, his conscience began to bother him. He asked for time to think it

over and went about to his friends to hear what they had to say. One said flatly that he should not take the job, for he must become a "slave driver" and would only do well just as long as he could exploit the help for the "boss"; another said that, just as long as there were "slaves" under capitalism, he would not help matters by not taking the job and he had the right to better himself. Still another said that he must take the job for the sake of his family; if he did not, another would; but my father could see to it that those who worked under him made a living: he should merely drive them, not whip them. This seemed sensible, and idealistic enough, and my father became Henry Ettelson's foreman.

He soon found out that Ettelson's other help, who had been friendly when he came looking for work to do at home, were unfriendly now that he had become the foreman. He knew how unfriendly they had been to the man whose place he had taken, but their unfriendliness to himself surprised him, for he wished all men well.

My father, to make the best showing, wanted the most profitable work made right in the shop; in fact, he wanted the shop to make all that he had feared it would when he was one of those who worked outside. But the designer, who was still in charge of those who worked outside and who had been so friendly to my father when he was one of these, was always trying to send them the most profitable work. He would have done so, too, since he was also in charge of the cutters, had not my father kept watch on what was ready for the sewing machines. It was to the designer's interest, so the man thought, to have the shop not so profitable as it might be, that his own position, in charge of the work outside, might be stronger. And when he found my father treading on his toes, asking for this bundle and that, he made up his mind to be rid of him as he had rid himself of the other foreman.

At home, my father complained about his troubles—how irritable Ettelson was and how treacherous the designer. My mother listened patiently, sometimes, with her round brow wrinkled, and told him that he must win out because he had the interest of the business at heart: Ettelson would see that, soon enough, because he was no fool. At other times, with a scornful smile that always angered my father, she told him that it was better for him

to be out in the world, struggling with men as good as he or better, than to be in a corner of his own home sewing away at his sewing machine. And he did not give up his job, although he wanted to.

My father always stayed later than the sewing-machine operators. One evening, he saw the young fellow who cleaned the shop sweeping a bundle of collars along with the rubbish. My father wondered what to do. He could, of course, send him away and it was no trouble at all to find another chap. Just scrawl a sign on a piece of cardboard and hang it downstairs at the door and before he should have time to come up, half a dozen fellows would be in the place begging for the job. But my father still had enough of the taste in his mouth of looking for work not to fire a man pronto. Although he was sure the young fellow was helping the designer make trouble, my father merely said sternly: "Take the collars out of the rubbish or I'll ask Mr. Ettelson to do it."

After that, whenever my father opened a bundle of work as it came from the cutting room, before he gave any of it to the operators, he looked to see if all the parts were there. If he was short, as he was time and again, he sent word to the designer; in a little while, whatever was missing would be sent in with bits of cloth clinging to it, as if it had been thrown on the floor among the cutters' rags.

THIS sparring with the designer had been going on for some time, with my father blocking him, when the designer thought it time to change his tactics. When my father next sent for what was missing, the designer came up to him shouting that it must have been lost among the sewing machines or at my father's own table. The designer supposed that Ettelson would come to see what was wrong and, surer of the designer, the older hand, would merely go back to his office, the designer's charges ringing in his ears.

But Ettelson, impatient though he was, listened to what both had to say. Instead of going back to his own work, he remained beside my father's table and sent for the bundles still in the cutting room. "Let's open them," he said. "Maybe we'll find the missing collars in one of these." The bundles were opened and Ettelson went through them himself. He

did not find the collars but saw that in one the belts were gone. He turned to the designer and asked angrily in his shrill voice: "How is this?"

"I suppose the marker forgot to mark them. I'll talk to him about it," and the designer went away, supposedly to do so. My father told the young fellow who swept the place—now friendly because he had not been "fired"—to look among the cutters' rags. Sure enough, by the time the designer was back, the missing collars and belts were on the table.

"Who cut this?" asked Ettelson.

"My brother," said the designer. He added lamely: "No matter how careful a cutter is one of the smaller parts sometimes falls on the floor."

Ettelson did not trouble to answer him and sent for the designer's brother. "You can go," he said. "You are through here." Then, turning to the designer, he added: "Be careful or your contract won't help you."

A FEW days later, when my father went to the cutting room for work, there was none: the shipping clerk, on orders from the designer, had sent away all that was cut to the contractors, and it would be several hours before other work was ready for the shop. My father went back and pulled out the switch; the sewing machines stopped and he told the girls to be back after lunch.

Ettelson hurried in at the sudden quiet. It was only fair, my father explained, in answer to his angry questioning, that all stop rather than that some work and others not. Ettelson was doubtful. Still, it was clear that all the work should not have been sent away and operators of his own shop left without any, and he told the clerk not to ship a bundle again before my father had taken what he needed.

The designer at last went too far. He and the cutters used to work on Labor Day without the double wages they had a right to, and Ettelson would pay them for the three Jewish holidays that come soon after, when they did not work (the two days of Rosh Hashanah, when the New Year is celebrated, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement). Now the designer told his cutters they were not to work on Labor Day unless paid double; if Ettelson would not pay them double, they were to strike; and, if they did strike, they

were also to demand that his brother be hired again.

Ettelson, however, paid them double for their work on Labor Day when they asked for it—and said nothing. Then he took two days' wages from their pay for not working the days of Rosh Hashanah.

The designer asked: "What's this? Why don't you pay us for the two days as always?"

"Because you didn't work," said Ettelson calmly. "When you work for me, I pay you. When you serve God, let Him reward you."

"If you don't pay us, the cutters will strike."

"If they strike, they are through here. And you, too."

"O no, I'm not!" shouted the designer. "I have a contract and it has two more years to run."

Ettelson did not answer him but went into his office. In a few minutes, the cutters were out on strike. Ettelson walked into the cutting room and found the designer there. He told him to leave. The designer did not budge and went about doing whatever he was at. Ettelson then sent the errand boy for a policeman. The designer blustered but the policeman put his hand under the designer's arm and led him downstairs. Now, as the sagas say, he is out of the story.

NEXT day, Ettelson had a new designer. He was not a Jew. A personage in the place where he lived (his home was in a small town near the city), mayor of the town and an elder in his church, he was a man of about fifty with gray eyes, long black beard turning gray, neat black clothes, and a heavy gold watch chain across his vest. He spoke little and, for the most part, calmly without gestures or inflection: a calm man whom God had made out of a cool Northern earth.

In the cutting room, not a set of patterns was in order; in some, all the patterns of a size were missing; in others, the patterns of a part in all sizes; and the patterns used most were all gone. (Months later, they were found hidden under old packing cases in the stock room.) But my father helped the new designer every night, sometimes until ten o'clock, until he had the patterns in order again. For this, Ettelson raised my father's wages three dollars a week.

The new designer was polite to my father at first but, perhaps, he found him somewhat

of a nuisance—shouting at the operators, bustling in and out of the cutting room and shipping room, yes, even his readiness to help. And my father, warm with gratitude for the three dollars extra he got a week, wanted to help all the more.

Once the new designer made a good-looking style—one of the best Ettelson ever had. But my father saw that it would be hard for an operator to sew. He told this to the designer as politely as he could, and was about to tell him that the pattern would have to be changed and how he thought it might be made, when the new designer interrupted him to say briefly: "Go to hell!"

My father could take a hint and went away to his sewing machines. When the first lot of the new style was cut up, he took only two bundles and gave only one to his operators. The other four were sent to the contractors. On the third day, when the wrappers should have been brought back, the contractors came with their work unfinished and said they could not make the style for twice what they were paid.

Ettelson called my father into his office and asked him how he had found the style. My father explained why it was hard to make. "That's too bad!" said Ettelson. "We are overloaded with orders on this style: we never had such a seller. Is there no easier way to make it?"

"There is, but the pattern will have to be changed."

"Why didn't you tell that to the designer?"

"I was going to, but he told me to go to hell."

Ettelson sprang up from his chair and was off like a shot to the cutting room. In a few minutes, the new designer came up to my father, face flushed and set. But he said quietly: "Please show me what you meant."

"With pleasure," said my father, just as dignified. "But I cannot explain it. If you'll let me, I'll make a pattern."

My father went into the cutting room and found Ettelson standing there. In about ten minutes, my father made a pattern, cut out a yoke, and then he said to the new designer: "Please come with me. I'll show you how this will work so that any operator can make it."

Ettelson followed them. My father seated himself at a sewing machine. In a few minutes, he made the yoke and sewed it to a

"front": it was as good as the sample. The new designer looked away from my father's elated face for a moment. Then he took his hand, shook it warmly, and said he was sorry for what he had said.

My father's wages were raised again, this time two dollars a week. And Ettelson told his new designer that before a new style was cut, he was to bring the pattern to my father for any change—if needed.

MY FATHER had seven "front-makers" working for him. One morning, five did not come to work. In a couple of hours, he knew, there would be no work for the girls sewing other parts; nor could they take the place of the "frontmakers" just like that, for these made about a quarter of the wrapper and the work took most skill. For an hour, my father did not know what to do and pattered about.

Suddenly, it was clear to him that one girl need not make all the "front." He opened no more bundles and gave six girls, who had been working at sleeves, collars, and belts, the "fronts" to make: two to join the "centers," two to gather and hem ruffles, and two to sew ruffles to yokes. The two "front-makers" who had come to work had only the "setting on" of the yokes to do. My father went from one to the other of the eight, showed them how he wanted the work made, stood over them, and saw to it that nothing was spoiled. By noon, the shop was running smoothly without the five "front-makers."

Ettelson had heard that most of his "front-makers" had not come to work. He kept peering about but, since all in the shop were kept busy, he said nothing until my father was back from lunch. Then he stopped him and said: "I hear you're in trouble."

My father smiled. "I'll see you before I go home, Mr. Ettelson. I'll know more about what I'm trying to do."

By the end of the day, my father had got as much work from thirty-one operators as he had from all of them before. He told Ettelson how he had hit upon what he called "team work" and the saving because of it. "I must tell you," my father went on to say, "that the workers have as much right to the added profit as he who hires them—he has no right to it all!" A good socialist might have said that the workers had the right to all the profit but, clearly, it would not have

been wise or useful for my father to go that far. It seemed to him that Ettelson's thin lips tightened, as it was. But Ettelson nodded.

A month later, the shop by "team work" instead of "section work" made about half as much more, the operators earned a quarter as much more, and, at the new year, my father was to get twenty-five dollars a week.

SUNDAY was the pleasantest day for me, too. Then my father would lie in bed late (Ettelson's place was closed on Sunday—not Saturday) and our home would be lively with pleasant chat as my mother made our breakfast. I would leave my cot for the big bed to climb upon the pillows or on my father as he lay under the quilt—to jump and keep jumping on the bed until I fell down laughing.

But one Sunday my mother dressed me early. The sliding doors of the parlor were opened, and I saw the sun shining through the white lace curtains that were starched so stiffly I did not like to touch them. I visited my enemies, the rubber plants near the window, to look again at the big thick leaves I disliked, but I had no time to stick a pin into them secretly and see the white sap. The doorbell kept ringing, friend after friend came, and the threshold was noisy with cheerful greetings.

The children of my age or so, old friends and friends brand-new, led by me, were soon racing up and down the long hall of the flat until we were wild with joy—and the man who lived downstairs came up to say timidly that his wife had a headache and would we please stop. I had run to the door, thinking it was still another friend. From behind my father's legs, I looked up at our neighbor's face, unpleasantly surprised to find myself the subject of their brief talk and the cynosure of their eyes.

I marshaled my companions into a favorite corner, between my parents' bed and the wall, at a loss what to do next. But just then my mother called out that dinner was ready. At this, all the children scrambled into the

dining room to find my mother bringing a great tureen of steaming beet soup, while she and the other women cried out: "Be careful!" My father was already seated at the head of the table, filling little glasses of brandy for the men.

One of the guests, the very man who had said when I was a baby that I was like a spider, now said in his dry voice, looking at my mother with a sarcastic smile: "May I ask what we are celebrating?"

My mother, busy dishing out the beet soup, her round face flushed, replied: "We were going to tell you after dinner, but since you ask—Nathan has had his wages raised five dollars! From now on he will get twenty-five dollars a week, and we have invited you all to celebrate with us."

The company turned to look at my father and almost all murmured congratulations. But the guest whose question had been answered smiled wryly and said: "Why celebrate? A day will come when his boss will *take* five dollars from Nathan's wages." He helped himself to a nice slice of herring before anyone else should get it.

"I hope not," cried my mother cheerfully, hiding her anger. "I hope, rather, that you will all be our guests when Nathan has his wages raised again." And that nobody might be envious, thinking of his own wages or of a less worthy husband's wages or, perhaps, the lack of any, she went on: "In other shops, a learner must work four weeks for nothing and the foreman gets as much as ten dollars from every learner he takes in. His boss gave Nathan the right to such money but he has never taken it. And in a shop as big as Ettelson's he could make a lot that way from the learners!"

By this time, every man had his glass of brandy and the women had been offered some and had all refused. My father, to end my mother's praise of him, called out in Hebrew the traditional toast: "To life!"

"To life!" the guests answered and were promptly helping themselves to black olives and slices of herring.

CEDARS OF LEBANON

THE ANGELS BURY MOSES

A Legend of the Falashas

ETHIOPIA'S "Black Jews," the Falashas, have been an object of speculation and curiosity since the late 18th century, when Europeans first became aware of their existence. Nothing is known with any certainty of their origin and early history. The Falashas themselves believe they are descended from Jews who came to Ethiopia with Menelik I, the alleged son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, or else from Jews who came after the destruction of the First or Second Temple. But few scholars believe that the Falashas are ethnically Jews, though the question of how and when they were converted to Judaism remains unanswered; possibly their conversion was the work of Jewish missionaries from Yemen. In any case, their Judaism probably dates from a time when the Mishnah and the Talmud were not yet compiled—that is, before 200 C.E.—since they rely upon the Old Testament and the Book of Jubilees and do not even know of the existence of the Talmud.

The story of the death of Moses which we reprint below is recited by the Falashas as part of their funeral service. Certain peculiarities of the Ethiopic text have been taken to indicate

that it derives from an Arabic version of the story, probably dating from the 14th or 15th century when Arabic influence was particularly strong in Ethiopia; ultimately, however, the supposed Arabic text may itself be derived from a Jewish source.

The translation given here is by Wolf Leslau from the Ethiopic text published by Jacques Faitlowitch (Paris, 1906), collated with a manuscript text in the National Library in Addis Ababa; the translation is taken from Dr. Leslau's *Falasha Anthology*, just published by Yale University Press for Judaica Research on the Louis M. Rabinowitz Foundation; the text appears here by the publisher's permission. (A short passage at the beginning, which has no direct relation to the story of Moses' death, has been omitted.)

READERS interested in becoming better acquainted with the Falashas are referred to Dr. Leslau's introduction to the *Falasha Anthology* as well as to his article "The Black Jews of Ethiopia" in the March 1949 issue of COMMENTARY.—ED.

BLESSED be God, the Lord of Israel, the Lord of all spirit and all flesh. The story of the coming of the Angel of Death to the prophet Moses, the son of Amram and Jochabed. . . .

Moses said to God: "O Lord, I adjure Thee, by Thy name which Thou hast revealed to me and which none knows but I and Thou alone, that Thou tell me the day in which Thou wilt take away my soul."

God said to Moses: "Listen, Moses, I shall tell thee, though I have told the day of his death to no man, neither to the prophets who were before thee nor even to the angels who approach me. To thee, Moses, I shall tell it: I shall take thy soul away on Friday."

And every Friday Moses put on burial clothes and purified himself for the arrival of the Angel of Death. After a time Moses forgot about the day [of his death] and ascended Mt. Sinai and prayed to God. Then the Angel of Death appeared and stood before him as a young man of the children of Israel and said to him: "Peace upon thee, Moses!" When Moses heard the voice of the Angel of Death his throat contracted, his tongue was tied, he was unable to utter a word, his knees trembled, and he fell on his face. Then he rose and said to the Angel of Death: "Who art thou that said to me: 'Peace be upon thee!' I never heard a voice which frightened me as does thine." The Angel of Death said to Moses: "Dost thou not know

me? Hearken, Moses, to what I tell thee: I am the one who is tasted by women and children; the one who destroys houses and builds graves until the coming of the end of the world. I am Suryal, the Angel of Death." Moses said to the Angel of Death: "What hast thou come to do?" The Angel of Death said to Moses: "I came to take thy soul and to bring her before God." Moses said to the Angel of Death: "I adjure thee by the God who sent thee not to take my soul until the third hour of the morning, until I shall go to my wife and children." God said to the Angel of Death: "Leave him until his time does arrive." The Angel left him until his time arrived and sat shaded from the sun.

Moses descended from Mt. Sinai and arrived at a parting of the ways; one road led to his wife and one to his mother. He stood between them and thought to himself: Should I go to my wife or to my mother? While he was so thinking he heard a voice from Heaven, saying: "Go first to thy mother." And he went to his mother. When he arrived at the door he called: "Open to me." His mother came, opened the door, and saw that the face of her son was sad and his body withered. She said to him: "What has befallen thee, my son? Did the shepherds come to tell thee that thy cattle got lost, or what is it that has happened to thee?" Moses said to his mother: "Who calls me but God, and who frightens me but Death?" His mother said to him: "Will he who spoke with God face to face and mouth to mouth die?" He said to his mother: "Yes, he will die; all the prophets died. Rise, put thy left foot at my left side, stretch out both thy hands and pray to God that He may ease the bitterness of death." She did what he told her and he kissed her. He parted from her and wept with a great weeping. She said: "Let us not believe in the fashion of this world, and let us look for what is in Heaven."

WHEN Moses went to his wife his spirit fainted, his body withered, and he knew not his way. He arrived at the door and said to her: "I am Moses, open to me." She arose and opened to him. Moses entered, and she saw that his face was pale and his heart faint. She said to him: "What has befallen thee, my beloved, that thy heart is faint and thy body withered? Hast thou lost thy camels or thy wealth?" Moses said to his

wife: "Who calls me but God, and who frightens me but Death?" His wife said to him: "Will he who spoke with God die?" He said to her: "Yes, he will die, Abraham died, and all the prophets died." And Moses said to his wife: "Where are my children?" His wife said to him: "They sleep in their beds." Moses said to his wife: "Bring them to me." And she wept with a great weeping. She went, weeping, and said to the children: "Go to your father before he dies, for you shall see him no more." She awakened them from their sleep and brought them, holding their hands in her right and left hands, and said to them: "Weep over your father, for you and he must part." They said to her: "Where is our father?" She brought them to their father and said to them: "Look well at your father until you be satisfied, for soon you will be parted." When they saw their father they fell on their faces and wept with a great weeping. Moses wept with them, and said to them: "We part from upon the earth." His wife said to him: "Shall we see one another then no more?" He put his younger son Eleazar on his right knee and his older son Gershom on his left and he blessed them. He said to them: "Now we part." They said: "Now that we part from our father, even he who loved us will deliver us [to others], and he who hates us will banish us." When Moses heard his children's words he wept, and Heaven and earth wept with him. God said to Moses: "What makes thee cry? Is it because thou leavest the earth or because thou fearest death?" Moses said to God: "My two children and my wife do make me cry. Her father, Jethro, died; my brother, Aaron, died too; and if I die, to whom will I leave them?" God said to Moses: "When thou wast born and thy mother Jochabed hid thee in a box and threw thee out upon the sea, did I forget thee then? I closed the mouth of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and made it so that his mouth could utter no words, and I made thee so that Tarmut, Pharaoh's daughter, loved thee much and called thee: 'My child,' and thou didst stay forty years. And now rise and take thy rod and smite the Red Sea." Moses arose and smote the sea. Then he went out of the sea and found a big stone that rolled. God said to Moses: "Strike this stone that rolls." And he struck the stone, and the stone burst asunder. He found in the stone a small worm eating green grass

that said: "Blessed be God who did not forget me until this day, while I was in the depths of the sea." God said to Moses: "Dost thou not see that I forgot not the worm while he lived hidden in a rolling stone in the sea? And dost thou think that I shall forget thy children when they pray to me? Thy children will be my security. And now, kiss thy children and thy wife, because those who will take thy soul away draw nigh, and thou wilt enter here no more." His wife embraced him, and she wept with a great weeping, and Moses wept with her. Then he went out of his house, and he left his wife and children. He walked with a faint heart and a pale face and did not know which way to walk. He met three handsome young men digging a grave. He said to them: "Peace upon you, and may God's peace be with you." Then he

said to them: "For whom do you dig this grave?" They said to him: "We dig it for a man beloved of God." Moses said to them: "If you dig it for a man beloved of God I shall help you and shall dig it with you." When they had finished the grave Moses said to them: "Bring the corpse that we should bury." The young men said—and they were angels in the appearance of men—"We are afraid that the place will be too small for him whom we would bury, and he is like thee in size, length, and appearance; now enter the grave and measure it for us." Moses entered the grave and he found there the Angel of Death. The Angel of Death said to Moses: "Peace upon thee, Moses, son of Amram." Moses said to the Angel of Death: "May the greeting return to thee." So Moses died, and the angels buried him.

NOAH

JACKSON MacLOW

READING the Hebrew bible
(Frightening book of my people)
I learned of the See of Knowledge
And the shameful brew of the vintage.

The sea that flooded with being
And the tree that drowned
with seeing
Mismatched, and their children
Were blinded by too much vision.

The monstrous sea of knowing
Engulfed them, and their drowning
Darkness bloomed to madness:
But few escaped their wildness.

Warned of the flood of destruction
To drown their mad action
The patriarch built a fortress
To defend the few from the tortures

That rained, in time, from the angered
Sea, whose word had fathered

These floods of blinded substance
In whom conscience, too great, had killed
conscience.

And their fort held out till the treaty
Was signed in the spectral archway:
No more, for the sin of knowledge
Too great, would the waters ravage.

And settled with beasts and vineyard
The patriarch drank and slumbered:
The fruit he had saved from the water
Flooded his veins; and a watcher

Beheld his shame, uncovered:
Then cursed was the son he had fathered,
Who had seen and told his surrender
At last to the flood—drowned in anger!

Thus said the Hebrew bible
(Bewildering book of my people)!
O Tree of Sin and Knowing
Devour us not in Thy growing!

JACKSON MacLOW has published poetry in various literary journals and appeared in these pages for the first time with his poem "After Recognition" (May 1950).

ON THE HORIZON

"THE DYBBUK" AS OPERA

CHEMJO VINAVER

THE première of David Tamkin's operatic version of *The Dybbuk*, presented by the New York City Opera Company this past October 4, comes a quarter of a century after the Habimah troupe from Moscow first made its entry into the European theatrical world with its production of the Ansky play. Both the play and the players became famous overnight, and both have continued to hold a special place in the modern drama. Habimah is now the national theater of Israel, and *The Dybbuk* has become a kind of cultural monument, representing even to many who have never seen it a "classic" of Jewish and world literature.

Even after all these years—and such unhappy years—one can still recall something of the peculiarly electrifying effect of the 1925 production on the cosmopolitan audience of the German capital in those days of cultural ferment. The Berlin critics, always on the alert against any artistic falsity, at once recognized in *The Dybbuk* a genuinely fresh note. This somber drama of demonic possession was more than folklore, and more than "good theater"; it was a deeply true evocation of a life that, mysteriously, was still going on in the towns and hamlets of Eastern Europe—a life governed by ancient commandments and rites, where the possibilities of good and evil retained an immediate reality which had long been lost in the more enlightened atmosphere of the West; perhaps, among other things, *The Dybbuk* owed its success in Berlin to a certain uneasy awareness of the limits of enlightenment.

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The history of the play contains in miniature some of the intellectual currents that agitated East European Jewry in the early years of this century. Semyon Akimovitch Ansky, whose real name was Solomon Seiwil Rapoport, had alienated himself from his Hasidic background and joined the revolutionary movement; after the revolt of 1905 he returned to the cultural world of the Jews and devoted himself particularly to exploring Jewish folklore. *The Dybbuk* was written in Russian, and translated by the author into Yiddish to be performed by the Vilner Truppe, and then once more translated into Hebrew—because the Habimah players, founded in 1916, had the temerity to believe that they were going to create the Hebrew theater of the future. The Hebrew translation was the work of the poet Chaim Nachman Bialik, leading figure of the Hebrew renaissance. The incidental music was composed by Joel Engel, formerly Yuli Dimitrievitch Engel, music critic of a leading Moscow newspaper—another "alienated" Jew who had returned to the culture of his people and who ended his life in Palestine. Finally, this play that was to become a Hebrew classic was directed by a Russian-Armenian, the great Moscow director Eugene Vachtangov.

The play is not a proper drama in the strict sense, but rather a loosely woven dramatic legend based on Hasidic lore and Jewish folkways. The brilliant young Talmudist and Cabalist Channon, frustrated of his predestined bride Leah, after his death enters into her body as a dybbuk; Channon's father, himself many years dead, appears to accuse Leah's father of having betrayed an agreement that their two children were to marry; in a final climactic scene, the dead father's claim is tried before a court of rabbis, and the dybbuk is exorcised, but the soul of Channon

calls to Leah and she follows him to death. A playwright concerned only with dramatic structure might have emphasized this plot for its own sake; Ansky, a man of refined conceptions, used it as a framework for the evocation of the whole strange world of Hasidism, that world which felt itself hovering every day on the brink of a miracle. And Vachtangov, true to Ansky's conception, with unfailing tact refrained from stressing action as such, but concentrated on the subtle interplay of the incidents surrounding each action—a shifting, poignant pattern of color and feeling. Thus the opening scene with its well-nigh audible silence, intensified by the occasional humming of the Hasidim in their meditations, impresses itself much more deeply upon the spectator than the rather bombastic ceremonial of exorcising the dybbuk in the last act, or the obvious theatrical "effect" of the trial between the dead and the living. Though not a Jew, Vachtangov showed an uncanny intuition for going beyond the mere presentation of "milieu" to grasp that living interplay of the mystical and the everyday which constituted the Hasidic ideal. In effect, Vachtangov created a *Dybbuk* tradition, and all later productions of the play have rested upon the foundation he established. How great his contribution was may be seen in the fact that the final act of the play, which he did not live to stage, has never achieved the depth of the earlier acts, though the script itself offers many potential highlights.

Of the later productions of *The Dybbuk* on the international stage none seems to have achieved quite the effect of that first appearance in Berlin, though some were surely not without merit. (I have a close personal recollection of the German production, *Der Dämon*, staged by Berthold Viertel with Gerda Mueller as Leah; the stage sets were done by Joseph Budko, and the incidental music was composed by a then young and "promising" musician, one Chemjo Vinaver.) But the play lives on, and those interested in serious drama will for many years to come find reason to return to it.

FROM the beginning, *The Dybbuk* had a special appeal in terms of music; Hasidism itself was a religious movement full of melody, and Joel Engel in his incidental music for the original production made full use of the Hasidic musical tradition; his score

abounds in folk motifs employed with an unerring instinct for the right tune in the right place. It was natural that musicians should have thought of turning the play into an opera. One such effort was made in the 30's by the Italian composer Lodovico Rocca. And now, *The Dybbuk* appears as an American opera.

It must be reported, regretfully, that Mr. Tamkin, for all the enthusiasm that greeted his work, has not succeeded in writing "the" opera of *The Dybbuk*. He proves himself a skillful musician, adept at instrumentation, and he deserves praise for a generally judicious treatment of the singing voice. But he lacks any deeper knowledge of Hasidic life, and seems insufficiently conversant with the traditional Hasidic musical idiom. There is little justification for turning a good play into an opera unless the operatic form deepens the impact and meaning of the drama, and this Mr. Tamkin's treatment does not achieve.

Paradoxically, the difficulty for the composer lies in those very virtues of immediacy and emotional power that make the play seem so "natural" a choice for opera. Pervaded as it is with the dense atmosphere of Hasidism, *The Dybbuk* projects a mood of such intensity that only music of extraordinary power could carry it any further, and anything less than that tends to diminish the original impact. For *The Dybbuk* is already, in a manner of speaking, an opera without music. Quite independently of any musical score, the characters of the play fill the stage with the distinctive *melos* of Jewish folk life; the very inflections of language, the rhythmic swaying of bodies, the ritual sing-song of the House of Study pervading even the most everyday speech (for to the Hasid there was no "everyday")—all this is already in a quite literal sense a form of music. And only by working from within, from the Hasidic tradition itself, might the composer hope to bring to *The Dybbuk* a note of higher intensity. To do this he would have to be a musician of genius, an artist perhaps of the type and stature of a Gustav Mahler, with Mahler's intuitive power and love of the mystical, though without Mahler's unfortunate alienation from Jewishness. Such a composer might succeed in transcending the play's obvious and "natural" operatic elements, the merely crude and spectacular manifestations of magic and horror, to seek out and intensify those subtler "things

between heaven and earth" which constitute its real riches: the unearthly devotion and fervor, the spiritual aura surrounding the simple Jews transformed by mystical faith.

One seeks in vain any such higher achievement in Tamkin's music. And even in the quieter passages—for example, the folk humor of the scene between the frightened bridegroom and his *melamed* trying to encourage him—Tamkin fails to live up to his opportunities. Now and then, when the composer does succeed in striking the right note, he invariably fails to sustain it—as in the dance which follows Sender's announcement of his daughter's betrothal, or in the fine short theme introducing the last act, which raises expectations and then vanishes: why so short of breath? Surely it is not the libretto that is at fault; on the whole the scenes lend themselves well to a sustained development leading up to an ecstatic climax—so characteristic of Hasidic emotional intensity. The *Beggars' Dance* in the second act is perhaps a bit more sustained musically, but the scene in expectation of the Rabbi, a potential highlight of the third act, blows over unnoticed: how moving this scene might have been made simply by having the Hasidim as they wait chant an authentic *nigun*, even if it was the one used by Habimah. One of the lesser sins against style should also be mentioned: the all too neat, almost synagogal "Amen" of the *minyán* at the close of the trial; absurdly reminiscent of a modern well-rehearsed choir, it is fatal to the mood of a mystical rite among Hasidim.

The presentation was excellent, greatly helped by Irving Pichel's direction, by the dances (choreography: Sophie Maslow), and by the imaginative though somewhat "Russified" stage settings (Mstislav Doboujinski). Alexander Tamkin, the composer's brother, responsible for the libretto, had the good sense and good taste to stick closely to the original script. The singers all did well; Robert Rounseville stood out particularly as Channon and Mack Harrell as Rabbi Azrael; Patricia Neway, who sang the part of Leah, no doubt has more to offer than the part permitted her. And there can be nothing but praise for the conductor, Joseph Rosenstock, who brought the entire cast to a polish and roundedness altogether unusual in a first performance.

Despite all the opera's shortcomings, a sufficient taste of the spirit inherent in *The*

Dybbuk did communicate itself that evening at the City Center, and the reaction of the audience was gratifying indeed. It is consoling to think that there are still people capable of being carried away by the image of so irrational and mysterious a world as that of this play, and one wonders whether after all there may not be the possibility in this country of a Jewish culture above the borscht-and-bagels level that some of our entrepreneurs of culture seem to have decided is all we can take. If even the fragmentary remains of our Hasidic heritage—a world at once exotic and esoteric to this generation so far removed from it in time, in space, and in spirit—can still arouse and inspire an audience in New York City, surely there must still exist somewhere in our Jewish life on these shores a spark of that fire which once was lit by those who had faith, a fire whose mere reflection is enough for warmth and illumination.

OF THAT fire the Hasidim tell a story which has been beautifully retold by the Hebrew novelist S. J. Agnon, and for which thanks are also due to Gershom Scholem, the distinguished scholar of Jewish mysticism.

"When the Baal Shem had a difficult task before him, he would go to a certain place in the woods, light a fire, and meditate in prayer—and what he had set out to perform was done.

"When a generation later the Maggid of Meseritz was faced with the same task he would go to the same place in the woods and say: We can no longer light the fire, but we can still speak the prayers—and what he wanted done became reality.

"Again a generation later Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov had to perform this task. And he too went into the woods and said: We can no longer light a fire, nor do we know the secret meditations belonging to the prayer, but we do know the place in the woods to which it all belongs—and that must be sufficient; and sufficient it was.

"But when another generation had passed and Rabbi Israel of Rishin was called upon to perform the task, he sat down on his golden chair in his castle and said: We cannot light the fire, we cannot speak the prayers, we do not know the place, but we can tell the story of how it was done. And the story which he told had the same effect as the actions of the other three."

THE STUDY OF MAN

THE HUMAN INFANT ACCORDING TO GESELL

With Some Notes on the Behavior of Mothers

ISA KAPP

A GENIAL anarchist, S. G., whom I came to know suddenly and intimately during 1950, has reached the age of one year, and can be dimly recognized in Dr. Arnold Gesell's profile (in his *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today*):

"The year-old baby is already capable of finer coordination in his eating and play activities. He picks small morsels of food from his tray with deft forceps prehension, and masticates and swallows with much less spilling from his mouth . . . may seize a spoon by the handle and brush it over his tray. He can also dip it into a cup and release it; all of which shows that he is advancing in his mastery of tools and of the solid and hollow geometry of space."

But can S. G., or any other lively individual baby, be fairly described in this laboratory language? No mother could think so, though a baby, more empirical in outlook, a spontaneous admirer of tidy procedures, might. The

THOUSANDS of American mothers are in the odd position of having raised their first child under rigid schedules, and their second under conditions of absolute freedom. If they are brave enough to have a third, they will find themselves obliged once again to figure out the practical implications of the latest scientific research. Looming large among recent contributors to the study of child-rearing is Dr. Arnold Gesell, who offers a picture of the normal child at various stages of his development, and coolly invites parents to make the best of it. Since, however, the I of the mother is never quite the eye of the scientist, some interesting complications are inevitable. ISA KAPP's most recent article in COMMENTARY was "Books for Jewish Children" (December 1949).

contemporary baby will in any case have to come to terms with many a more pedantic image of himself. For his relation with his parents has lost its 19th-century privacy and become the public obsession of an imposing didactic literature.

BY "GESELL" (a name handed from mother to mother as a respectable token of their common experience, just as certain dress and perfume labels are the shorthand proof that one has been in Paris) is usually meant his *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today* (1943) which, along with *The Child From Five to Ten* (1946), summarizes the results of observing children at the Yale New Haven Clinic for thirty-two years. This article considers only the first volume, covering the period during which the character of the mother *qua* mother becomes undisguisably apparent to everyone but herself. Dr. Gesell has called his work a cultural anthropology and, although it is popularly thought of as a guide and can ultimately be used as that, its real distinction lies in a mass of descriptive material organized into laws about the structure, environment, and behavior of the modern child.

The body of the book, the part that makes or breaks a mother's faith in its author, consists in a factual statement of the child's growth characteristics during the first five years of life. To demonstrate what a continuing, knitting kind of process growth is, and to point up its constant sloughings off, projections, displacements, and transmutations of the past, Dr. Gesell makes all his evaluations comparative. He selects definite moments of maturity—four, sixteen, twenty-eight weeks, and so on—and delineates at each the progress in posture, per-

ception, prehension, language adaptation, sociability: in short, the total but unfinished baby, on one rung of his confident climb toward self-containment. He is able to predict with uncanny accuracy that a sixteen-weeks-old baby will open his fist and bring his fingers together across his chest, that twenty-eight weeks is the heyday of the manipulation of objects, that a forty-week-old learns "pat-a-cake," "bye-bye," and the difference between one and two; that a two-year-old is a solitary, a three-year-old docile and delightful, and a four-year-old bossy and boastful.

That these generalizing profiles are acknowledged as the most reliable contribution to the science of child study, has not diminished the resistance of mothers to such profiles or to science. When a mother asks, "What do you think of Gesell?" she usually means: "Do you really enjoy knowing what your child will or ought to do at a certain age?" Dr. Gesell explains in the introduction to his book that the age norms are not set up as standards; the prevalence of individual variations is recognized at every turn, and it is by the norms that we become conscious of such variations. But in spite of his caution, Dr. Gesell is doomed to responsibility not only for his dispassionate formulations, but also for our own passionate vanities. And in fact we may be able partly to blame Dr. Gesell when some modern mother can say with competitive smugness, "Yes, my child is an extremely early talker"; when sophisticated women weep because their children learn to sit or walk behind schedule; when sensible parents feel defrauded of their child's eccentric charm on reading that her cocking of her head at six months is only the routine initiation of feminine coyness.

THE implication intended by Dr. Gesell is really patience—he means to say that all the necessary aptitudes will be developed in good time ("everything in season" ends many of the profiles). The deviations are usually only temporary imbalances or rough transitions, and what parents fearfully regard as abnormal or retarded will be straightened out when their child is neurologically and physiologically a little older. Still it does seem that Dr. Gesell's profiles, taken at face value and out of context (and is not anxious motherhood the taker-out-of-context *par excellence*?), place a great emphasis on the normal. He does not trouble much to account for abnormalities, or to say

exactly at what point they could become ominous. His book could do with a few optimistic profiles of eccentrics. It is because of his indifference to the unusual and unexpected that Dr. Gesell often starts as a god and ends as a devil in the opinions of the worrying mother.

Benjamin Spock, on the other hand, takes every possible occasion in his by now classic *Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946) to mention the variety of pace and style of babies' development, and this is only one of his levelheaded ways of ministering to the necessary confidence of the parent. In the end, Dr. Spock is always viewed more tenderly by parents than Dr. Gesell, who has made the more original if not more compassionate contribution to our knowledge of children. Of course, it is always easier to like the dependable family doctor than the impersonal laboratory researcher; and it must also be considered that Gesell is usually read in perspective by a skeptical parent trying to keep up culturally with the Joneses, while Spock is the recourse of a desperate father overwhelmed by a blotchy rash and a storm of howls at 3 A.M.

STILL, if one can put aside the threatening concept of a "norm," one can take a great deal of pleasure in the brisk exactness and persistent energetic investigation that has gone into the profiles of Dr. Gesell's *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today*. He likes to make fine distinctions, to reveal the interplay of the concrete and the abstract, and to perpetuate the baby's and the reader's sense of discovery; and all this turns his science into a wise and vital prosaicism, if not into pure poetry. Thus the businesslike profile quoted above continues more warmly: "The year-old child likes an audience. This is one reason why he is so often the center of the household group. As such he shows a Thespian tendency to repeat performances laughed at. He enjoys applause. This must help him to sense his own self-identity, just as he learned better to sense a clothespin when he brought it banging down against his tray. He is defining a difficult psychological distinction—the difference between himself and others. . . .

"He may be a prodigious imitator. Demonstrate the ringing of a bell and he will wave it furiously by way of social reciprocity. But suddenly in the very midst of this waving he stops to poke the clapper with his inquisitive

index! This poking was not part of the demonstration, but it is part of the child."

THOSE generalizations that seem most vulnerable to attack turn up in the "behavior days" which accompany the profiles and rather dogmatically set down a baby's activity from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. (no insomniac infant shows his dissipated eyelids in a Gesell-directed living room after sundown), allocating the proper time for naps, baths, and sociability. The greatest limitation of these reports is the obvious middle-class milieu they assume, with a neat, comfortably equipped household. Their regularity and serenity give no hint of the frantic and disorderly mess that a household of any class can sometimes become under the tyranny of a baby and the distraction of a mother; and can only appear ludicrous to a reader who is poor, has many children, or was brought up in Kentucky instead of Connecticut. But it should be mentioned that Dr. Gesell deliberately followed the procedure of choosing the babies to be observed from homes in the middle socio-economic range. Their fathers were policemen, ticket-sellers, machinists, foremen, printers, and American-born, while their grandparents were European. Dr. Gesell felt this was the closest he could come to an ordinary or average American home. It may be argued that he did not take the most fruitful or imaginative approach to child personality, but he can at least be depended on to see and state his own limitations.

We see the same ability to define his scope exactly in his answer to readers disappointed in his apparent lack of concern with the individual psychology of infants. He explains in *The Psychology of Early Growth* (1938) that since personality make-up involves something more complicated than the quantitative method he uses, his purely psychological insights are largely accidental. A general law of biology can account for a specific attitude toward the world (Dr. Gesell says that a two-and-a-half-year-old is hard to discipline because the nerve-cell organization that presides over inhibitions is poorly developed), and to the extent that neurology and behavior can represent individual personality, Dr. Gesell has formulated an infant psychology. But, of course, it is only a partial one, and the common maternal complaint is that it eschews childish feelings and the deeper sources of childish temperament. Dr. Gesell never considers the possibility

that a baby may have some very *personal* reason for its tears, some pressing anxiety that might be discovered and dispelled. The attachments a baby forms, the jealousies and slights it suffers, are not recorded in the behavior profiles, and it might be said that Dr. Gesell has in fact overlooked the whole realm of childish sorrow.

In his defense, one can only point out that a scientist does not resent being in the realm of the inscrutable, while a parent does. A parent is determined to find in his baby a small but exact copy of himself, and cannot imagine that before anatomy and physiology have had some time to interact, there can be no such thing as an autonomy of the mind. Eventually the quantity of nervous organization will produce a new quality, sensibility—but a parent is always rushing the transformation. This is only one more instance of that persistent adult anthropomorphism which interprets a baby's uneasy wriggles as marks of disapproval, haphazard jerks as dancing, glances of stoical indecision as "She thinks I'm crazy," and a burst of grunts as "I don't care for your cooking" or "What in the world is keeping you?"

If a parent could put aside his xenophobia, he might take a special interest in the fact that his baby is located simultaneously in the apartment of its parents and in a very distinct universe of its own. For a time, its life is vegetative and it lives only as an organism in a world of things. Before it can become, in Dr. Gesell's phrase, "a person in a world of persons," it must absorb all the difficult concepts of time, space, number, form, texture, color, and causality. Dr. Gesell's writing is full of passionate veneration for the gradual yet wonderfully efficient process of growing, and the contagiousness of this writing provides some of the pleasure of reading *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today*. But the more important pleasure is in our glimpse of science at its most modest and benevolent: not the new, gothic science that unleashes mysterious forces, but the old-fashioned variety that honors and faithfully describes the observable facts.

THIS book is unusual, moreover, as an account of laboratory experiment in that its writer is as interested in ideas as in statistics, and takes pains to draw from the facts a general way of comprehending and accepting those organic processes that we ordinarily notice only when they annoy us. Although Dr. Gesell

spent a good deal of his time at Yale with the techniques and equipment of observation, he likes to involve his descriptions with some aspect of scientific philosophy. A relativist, he points out that no phase of a baby's growth can be understood separately, out of context with the whole career of its growth. Thus an infant's automatic casting of toys on the floor is the rudiment of its eventual ability to throw and count. A year-old infant is biologically a fifteen-month child in the making. Feeding, toilet-training, sleeping are all cyclical patterns in which rhythms and mastery are constantly changing as the baby develops. Watching babies has made Dr. Gesell very conscious of Heraclitus' notion that "nothing is, everything is becoming."

The theoretical part of this book is not entirely free from the kind of jargon that seems to characterize most formulations in the non-physical sciences. It is full of managerial terms like developmental, mechanism, manipulation, consolidation. But this jargon, while not subtle, does not prevent the plain expression of Dr. Gesell's morality toward children. He describes his view as a developmental philosophy, which argues that the parents' expectations must take their cue from the natural abilities of the child. It rules out absolutism and fanaticism, stresses the ingenuity and inevitability of growth, and assures us that we need not be "so grimly determined and soberly solicitous." Dr. Gesell speaks of a baby's nervous structure as being an ordering force against chaos and diversity. He is always discovering in nature a system of checks and balances. He believes, for example, that a baby's familial and racial heredity—the force that makes him a distinct individual—keeps him from becoming the pawn of his culture: "... he is durable as well as docile." And in general Dr. Gesell posits a firmly anti-Hobbesian view of nature as benign, prodigious, and wise.

BUT the middle-class parents who are interested in Dr. Gesell have not usually read him in terms of his philosophy. Despite the fact that he is a scientist, not a counselor, his books have been seized upon as guides to the perplexed, and their danger lies in the aura of enlightened, authoritative sanctity with which they have surrounded the problems of child-rearing. To this extent, at least, Dr. Gesell is responsible for the complacent and solemn tone

of the popular psychiatric handbooks and for the self-effacement of the mother.

For the modern mother, especially if she lives in a city, can no longer regard her baby with equanimity unless she has some professionally created image to bolster her judgment. She has no heart for hit-and-miss procedures, and just as she will not understand her own behavior without the psychology course identified in the college bulletin, will not pick up a paint brush or join a game without the mimeographed instructions, so she will not pick up her child in comfort without a literature of guidance. She comes to this literature not so much with a hearty respect for knowledge as with an insistent devaluation of her own perceptions. David Riesman has described in *The Lonely Crowd* those parents who, whatever scheme of child-rearing they adopt, cannot help showing their children how little they—the adults—depend on themselves and how much on the authority of others. "Whatever they seem to be teaching the child in terms of content, they are passing on to him their own contagious, highly diffuse anxiety."

To the pediatricians and psychologists who have more recently been drafted as cicerones, the weak cry of the parent reverberates more poignantly than the lusty howl of the baby. From the Federal Security Agency's antiseptic recommendations for cleanliness and affection, through the intermediate writers for the women's clubs and parent-teacher associations, to Benjamin Spock's warm, humorous, de-sentimentalized version of Dr. Christian, the tone of the guidance literature is palliative. Parents are protected against confusing advice, accusations of authoritarianism, total responsibility for their children, and sometimes even against insight—as in the bright, flippant book *In Defense of Mothers* (1950), in which Dr. Leo Kanner feels obliged to burlesque Freudian theory lest it frighten suggestible readers. (There are, incidentally, no popular American books in this literature that express a strictly Freudian view of child development. Many of the widely read authors, like Spock and Sidonie Gruenberg, take for granted the kinds of childhood experience Freud drew attention to, such as rages, fears, and "erotic" curiosities. But they seem also to recognize that the instincts and the passions are not a province in which the middle-class American parent feels comfortable. The moderate tone of these writers was made easier by the earlier successes of

John Dewey's child-centered philosophy of education. In England, however, where a conservative educational philosophy dominated popular practice, no important transitional school existed, and the rebellious Freudian note sounded more distinctively in the writings of Susan Isaacs, Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, and Winifred de Kok.)

IN AMERICA, from whatever publication on child-rearing you happen to look into—including the homey magazines distributed gratis by the diaper companies—you cannot fail to amass useful information on bassinets, irritable crying, mosquito netting, thumb-sucking, and the thousand other natural shocks and problems to which, as mother, you are presumable heir. It is hard to see how knowing any of these things could do any harm, and yet in many cases such literature dulls the actual experience of raising a child, and diminishes the stature of the mother.

To the literate modern, a child shapes himself from the beginning as an objective aggregate of functions, patterns, and stages of development. But in the previous generation, more primitive and stern, which might allow him to cry all night, he was accepted as a bundle of chaotic energy that demanded to be confronted as a whole. An entirely formed person, he was at once designated as a scholar, a fighter, the image of an uncle—in any case, a baby of character rather than characteristics. Today we emphasize his limitations, his helplessness; they emphasized his potential powers: then he was already fated for a role, for responsibility. The modern mother, with the baby's biology more exactly before her, loses the vision of his possible greatness. For the previous generation, the difference of sex was at birth already tremendously important; there was an actual difference in imagined destiny, in the hopes for the future focused on this event. It was very much the spirit in which Santayana introduces his hero in *The Last Puritan*:

"His little organism, long before birth, had put aside the soft and drowsy temptation to be a female. It would have been so simple for the last pair of chromosomes to have doubled up like the rest and turned out every cell in the future body complete, well-balanced, serene, and feminine. Instead, one intrepid particle decided to live alone, unmated, unsatisfied, restless, and masculine; and it imposed this unstable romantic equilibrium on every item of

the man-child's flesh, and of the man-child's sinews. . . ."

Now we democratically pretend to feel that it makes no difference what sex we beget, possibly because there is a greater social equality between male and female, but more probably because the *general* obligations of child-rearing seem larger and more serious to us than any particular infant. Though the change has made us more considerate—the old point of view often led to sickness, brutality, and blindness as to what children were up to—it has also made us more self-conscious. We have rather proudly forfeited our natural impulses in favor of professionally approved responses.

There is no longer conceivable a scene like the one in Joyce Cary's *To Be a Pilgrim*, in which a Victorian son, whipped by his father, and a few minutes later requested to bring his father's hat, eagerly runs for it, having affectionately accepted both punishment and forgiveness. As parents, we are still in the early and therefore boastful stages of the Enlightenment, and cannot imagine how a spark of the irrational, the "outrageous," might minister to the well-being of our children. To prove to ourselves how very sensible we are, we turn the simplest and most pleasing acts into dull lesson plans, and spring examinations upon ourselves in affection and libertarianism. We are under a constant and grueling pressure to allow our children freedom. An old-fashioned mother who was not especially fussy with her child might nevertheless rush him into the bathroom for a fast scrub before a guest arrived. But the compulsive modern mother, even if she has been worrying about her offspring all day, will proudly present him to company with dirty knees. She lets him play with dirt, feed the dog, and investigate his excrement; but her only reward is mounting tension. Hers is an era of tactful toilet-training, precocious beef-consumption, democratic nurseries, and nervous motherhood.

TANTALIZED, but not yet liberated, by the dribbles of leisure and education that are available to her, the insecure, progressively oriented woman tries desperately to understand her child. She keeps a sharp eye on the neighbor who is retarding her baby by withholding affection; she goes out Saturday afternoons to assure herself that she is still an individual as well as a mother; she affects a marvelous nonchalance about her child's clothing; and rather

than indulge herself in an irritable outburst or a slap, will go about endlessly pinched in the face by polite repressions. The worst of her plight is that her child will be the first to sense and dislike her deception, like the boy of four whose mother asked if he wanted some delicious cheese, juicy applesauce, or lovely spinach, only to have him look critically at her artificially arranged features and peevishly order something she hadn't mentioned. A unique and disheartening situation, when these green little nursery tenants can already condescend to their parents.

The real trouble of the book-guided mother is that she cannot and will not go backward to intuitive and improvised "parent-child relationships," and can only go timidly forward toward sociology and medicine. She has lost the dangerous simplicity of the instincts and has not yet gained the patience or reasonableness of scientific discipline. She still hovers in that middle position which is the most arduous to sustain, whether in politics or child-rearing. As often happens, the extremists—in this case, the old-fashioned grandmother and the scientists like Dr. Gesell—really feel the power of their own opinions and glow with satisfaction in their point of view; and also, incidentally, they seem to monopolize the resources of verbal expression. Those caught in between are at best borrowers, suspicious of themselves and competitive with others.

THE instinctive, primitive, uneducated parents had their own rough grace; the scientists have their touch of godliness. But the mid-way "progressive" parents tend to be tense in their casualness, cloddish in their glibness. A whole jargon of solicitous abstractions has sprung up that expresses their uneasy position. Having a child is an "experience" that helps you to "mature." Children are endangered by "over-protection," over-tiredness, or rejection. A mother can believe she has given psychology its due when she says to her noisy boy: "Why, I know what's the matter with you, dear, you're feeling neglected, aren't you?" And a colorful, personable baby can be referred to by his own mother in these "other-directed" terms: "J. is a very *good* child. Sometimes he has temper tantrums, which are of course upsetting. But in general he is a perfectly normal, healthy, happy, sociable boy."

Since it is difficult for the modern mother to escape her in-between position, she must

exploit it and borrow shrewdly from both extremes. The wisdom of grannies is legendary and needs no elaboration, but scientists are commonly thought to be cold and mechanical. In fact, however, scientists like Dr. Gesell have often proved themselves (at least on the conscious, articulate level) the true appreciators of children. They are forced to think and speak precisely, and in this sense they become poets, sensitive to distinctions, exact, dispassionate, and yet full of the wonder of childish growth and childish eccentricity.

ONE can find in *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today*, if one needs them, a number of practical recommendations, such as indexes of play materials and books suitable to various ages. But a parent ought not to read Dr. Gesell mainly for these or, in fact, for any sort of literal instruction. As Dr. Abraham Meyerson says in speaking of changes of style in child-rearing: "The ancient Jewish scholars had a name for it; they called it '*tamar verkehrt*' which means that turning things upside down may bring as satisfactory results in the seeking of truth as logic itself." Dr. Gesell should be read either for his sensible and encouraging philosophy, which is full of reason for pleasure rather than anxiety, or out of pure curiosity for facts that are sufficiently entertaining in themselves.

The most damaging accusation against Dr. Gesell is that he has created the image of an anonymous, factory-produced baby, an identical twin to every one of its own age group. But the accusers forget that, although it is immensely satisfying to identify and differentiate the personality of your own baby, its singularity can be revealed only in the interstices of scrubs and mouthfuls, in sudden glances, dazzling ducks of the head, guttural laughs, weak joyful giggles, and puzzled worshipful eyes. If I had to say what makes S. G. different from all other babies, I would submit her passion for all things sour—pot cheese, grapefruit rind, and entire lemons; her contempt for formal toys; her instantaneous appreciation of belts; her reverence for the dark abysses of bathing caps and oatmeal boxes; her expression of critical condescension; and her persistent intimate peering at preoccupied adults. But these are not the province of the scientist; they are the shocks of recognition of mothers. After all, there is a limit to the amount of poetry a pedant can discover in a nursery.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Mr. Daiches Replies to His Critics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

My article entitled "American Judaism: A Personal View" which appeared in your February issue has stirred up more controversy and brought down more abuse (and I mean abuse) on my head than anything I have ever written. I thought that I had safeguarded myself from the accusation of trying to lay down the law for others by calling the piece "a *personal view*," but evidently I was wrong. Who am I to tell American Jews what they ought to do and to believe? people asked angrily. Well, in the first place, I wasn't telling them what they should do and believe; I was giving my own personal view, admittedly conditioned by my special background and my fragmentary knowledge of American Jewish life. In the second place, I wrote the article because the editors of COMMENTARY, interested in the opinions of a fellow Jew of another country who had had a lengthy sojourn in the United States, invited me to. Having been asked to write the article, I wrote it as honestly as I could.

We live in a difficult and confused world. The problem of the relation of the Jew to his neighbor and to his past is but one part of a large pattern of problems which are bound up with some of the most far-reaching social, moral, and cultural issues with which men can be faced. New knowledge—physical, psychological, anthropological—flows in on us daily. Man's technical resources grow ever greater. Human understanding and human cruelty seem to be expanding side by side. What is the duty of the thoughtful and sensitive individual in the face of these disturbing problems? And is that duty different if the individual happens to be born a Jew? If so, why and how? Should we develop our particularist traditions in order to see how they can contribute to a common wisdom, or should we join hands with humane and intelligent men of whatever background to find a common faith and a common ideal? There is no single or sure answer to these questions. Nor is there a single or sure answer to the question that every Jew has to ask himself at one time or another: "What kind of loyalty do I owe to my ancestral traditions, and how can it be best manifested?"

It was with this larger perspective in view that I wrote my article. There are many admirable Jewish scholars in this country, many lively Jewish communities, many good preachers, many fine characters: if I did not dwell on this, it was because I was concerned with the total scene, not with special cases. The total picture seemed to me, as it still seems, one of self-deceptive compromise: but I am of course willing to see the compromise defended and to listen sympathetically to what can be said on the other side. I consider myself honored indeed that my article met with two full-length replies—one from Rabbi Leo Baeck ("The Task of Being an American Jew," March 1951), whose name and work I have long known and respected, and one from Professor Milton Konvitz ("A Letter to David Daiches," May 1951), a warm personal friend whose friendship I value immensely and whose mind and character I profoundly admire. In the last analysis, perhaps, it is the quality of his personality rather than the logical coherence of his ideas that makes a man a force for good and for wisdom in the world; and if that be so, I must retire before both my opponents. Nevertheless, ideas—what we can discover of truth—remain important to me, and I must develop my views in the way that my convictions compel me.

Most of the letters that criticized my position (both those printed and those that were sent to me privately) sneer at me as an "escapist" or somebody who wishes other people to do as I say, not as I do. Of course, it cuts no ice to call a man an escapist. I believe what I can, and come to my conclusions through the exercise of as much thought as I am capable of. If I wished to "escape" in the sense of denying my Jewish origin, I needn't have written for COMMENTARY at all.

As for the charge that I ask other Jews to do as I say, not as I do, I suppose in a sense I am vulnerable to it. But I am vulnerable only because of my concern with what appears to me consistency and intellectual honesty. If you believe such-and-such, then it seems to me to be logical that you should do such-and-such. If you don't do such-and-such, I cannot see how you can profess to believe such-and-such. If a

man says that he is a vegetarian and I find him eating meat, surely I have the right to say: "Look here, what earthly right have you, a vegetarian, to eat meat?" Not being a vegetarian myself, I could of course quite consistently sit down and order a steak. I was talking of those who actively profess the Jewish religion as a creed by which to organize their daily lives. As long as I so professed it (and I did for a long time), I led the kind of life which seemed, and still seems, to me the only logical kind of life for an actively professing religious Jew to lead. Ceasing to practice it, I should, it seemed to me, cease professing it. Others who have come to the same position should, if they are interested in consistency, do the same. Or they should, in the interest of integrity, return to the practices that square with their avowed faith, rather than engage in practices which bear no relation to it, or plainly flout it. That is all I was saying.

Argument against my position could only proceed effectively from an attack on my premises—not on my motives or personality. Finally—not to take up more space replying to petty, silly attacks—let me just say that it is much more difficult to hew out your own position and refuse to take an obvious and easy place in the life of the Jewish community than it is to fall into the easy pattern of Jewish communal living, with its office-seekers, pillars of the community, fund-raising busybodies, and all the other paraphernalia of American religious community life, whether Baptist, Catholic, or Jewish. It is, no doubt, a pleasant, easy, conventional existence—"escapist" in fact.

I received a few letters of congratulation (on the whole, more literate than the abusive ones). One writer wrote: "You could do a piece on the Jewish community. The dishonesty there is far greater than in the 'Temple.' It's all a matter of commercial 'promotion' taken over by 'leaders'—self-appointed—who kid themselves and their constituents that they are building something worth while instead of a bureaucracy of 'workers' and a group that expects to get some reward from the non-Jewish world because they are 'prominent' Jews. . . ." Well, I shall leave such an article to be written by an American Jew who knows the scene better than I do. But at least let me note that some American Jews are highly critical of what is going on—and add that complacency is not, as far as I am aware, a Jewish virtue.

Let me say also that those who shook their heads over the fact that a son of my father should have fallen away from his fine example misunderstand the whole picture very thoroughly. My father's essay on Liberal Judaism first taught me to suspect compromises that try to

make the best of two worlds while ignoring some of the central facts about both: I learned from him above all things intellectual integrity, and the importance of not descending to personalities in discussing ideas. If I have reached a position very different from what his was—and I realize of course that I have—it was in discussion with his keen and eager mind that I first developed it. My father was an Orthodox rabbi; but he was also a wise and understanding man, and one who did not suffer fools gladly. My unbelief would have upset him, but that the defense of Judaism was in the hands of people like some of those who wrote abusive letters about my article would have upset him even more.

BUT let me turn now to Milton Konvitz's article, which was impressive if not convincing. I must confess that I am quite bewildered to find him saying: "If your fundamental assertions are right, then I have been misliving my life; then I have gained from my background, experience, and education only a bushel of tares while you possess the wheat. I feel myself, therefore, personally challenged." I don't feel myself in the least personally challenged by Professor Konvitz's point of view and way of life, and why on earth should he be by mine? I cannot understand the emotional, almost hysterical, tone of parts of his article. Look, Milton: these problems are all insoluble; we grope for what partial solution is made possible for us by our thinking and circumstances; we throw out ideas which help us to see straight and to come to terms with ourselves. The article I wrote was my development of just some such ideas. They were personal, prejudiced (no doubt: we all are), but honest. Why is everybody so excited? Why were so many people not only excited but personally offended and *disturbed*? Is it because I said things that had been in their minds but which they had not dared to face? I wonder. More significantly, I think that in many cases it was because I suggested that an ultimate reconciliation between Judaism as a religion and what is known as "the American way of life" (a secular democracy based on the philosophy of the Enlightenment) was impossible. I received more abusive letters for saying that than for any other single point that I made.

I reject *in toto* Milton Konvitz's suggestion that the difference between us stems from a difference between two views of tradition: he asserts that I look back nostalgically to the past and, finding that the tradition of the past is impossible to maintain in the present, I reject it totally. But this is not the case at all. It is not a question of how you define tradition, or

whether you agree with Plato or Emerson (of course both are right and both wrong) or T. S. Eliot, but a question of intellectual honesty in the use of terms and the organizing of one's life. As I understand it, it is I and not Mr. Konvitz who wishes to modify the tradition, to get what one can out of it, to take the pulp from the pomegranate and throw away the skin; it is I, and not he, who has the right to choose the motto, "*Homo sum, et nihil humani a me alienum puto*"—"I am a man and nothing human is alien to me." (In fact, I had included it in my original article, but later took it out as too obvious.) If you take something from Jewish wisdom, something from Greek, something from the secular tradition of the Enlightenment, and other elements from other sources, and call your resultant synthesis Judaism on the grounds that tradition is flexible—well, that seems to me to be pushing language to an unwarranted extreme.

Mr. Konvitz and I both do the same things with our tradition, but he insists that the result is still Judaism, and I question whether it is. A tradition is flexible within limits, but above all it is an organic growth. If you move outside it to add elements which derive from totally different cultures, and if in doing so you find yourself in *exactly* the same position as people from non-Jewish backgrounds who have taken something from the Jewish tradition and other things from other sources, then precisely on what grounds do you insist on maintaining your separateness as a Jew? From talking with Mr. Konvitz I gather that his actual personal beliefs are similar to if not identical with those of a Unitarian—or, at least, he maintains that a belief in one God is all you require in order to call yourself a religious Jew. What, then, is the difference between this kind of religious Jew and a Unitarian? Racial? I wonder if Mr. Konvitz would really maintain that. The difference is that Mr. Konvitz believes x and calls his belief a modification of Judaism because his ancestors were Jews; the Unitarian believes that same x and considers his belief a modification of Christianity. The beliefs themselves are identical. All right then: on what grounds would Mr. Konvitz distinguish himself from the Unitarian? Or object to his son's marrying the Unitarian's daughter? Racial pride?

THE fact of the matter is that the jealous guarding of the integrity of a religious or cultural tradition was justified only in ages when each cultural or religious group was guarding some special aspect of the truth which was denied or ignored by other groups. In such a situation, the abandonment of your tradition would have meant a real loss to civilization. In

the Middle Ages the Jews justified their existence most of all by simply being there and refusing to accede to the *Gleichschaltung* of medieval Christendom. They kept the channels of human thought open. They were the great questioners, the deniers of the majority view, the guardians of another truth which the majority could and would not see. Their function was to remain steadfast and always cry "T'ain't so!" to stories of the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, and the Trinity, to a belief in asceticism and emphasis on the next world. It was an important function—the true protestant function—and, I think, it prevented culture from atrophying in the Middle Ages. If I were a medieval Jew I should maintain my faith to the last. It was a view of truth which was of the utmost importance, a view ignored by the majority faith. But the situation is quite different once culture and speculative thought begin to move freely and are not guarded by closed social groups. Today any intelligent and educated person has access to any aspect of the thought of the world which he may wish to investigate. And humane and thoughtful men are agreeing on general principles which cut across the lines of their religious ancestry. *On what grounds should we compel those men, who agree with each other, to pretend that they are maintaining separate traditions?* When one considers the suffering and mental torture caused by this pretense—among Jewish students, for example, whom I have seen sorely troubled by the problem of where to draw the line in their relations with fellow students who are not Jewish but whose beliefs are identical with theirs—one wonders whether it is worth it.

If the modern Jew wants to continue to be the eternal protestant, then he has a great role cut out for him, and ample grounds for maintaining his separateness. But it is a hard role, and it brings with it continued discrimination and even persecution. Let him be the eternal questioner. When patriots wave the flag, let him gravely question the wisdom of that kind of patriotism. When people praise the Constitution, let him suggest that it does not contain the ultimate in wisdom, and might be improved. When people talk of the American way of life, let him argue that it is not the best way of life open to men, and propose alternatives. That is an invidious task, and brings with it martyrdom of one kind or another. If Jews wish to keep themselves eternally separate from their fellow men in the Diaspora, they can play a noble and heroic role today as they did in the Middle Ages. But for Heaven's sake let them not become the super-Babbitts of the time, out-philistining the philistines, mimicking the more trivial and socially stupid mores of

their neighbors, and giving a thin Jewish gloss to the general Babbitry of the age. It makes me positively sick in my stomach to see Jews—in America or Britain or France or anywhere else: this is not a specifically American problem—giving a fake Semitic twist to their neighbors' superficialities and thinking that in doing so they are maintaining the Jewish tradition.

"In Judaism, then, the past is altered by the present, and the present is altered by the past." Yes, Milton; in Judaism and in the history of culture generally; but is it *this* kind of alteration you want? Or do you want the conscious and informed modification of ancestral ideas in the light of the best that is available in ideas and information? And if you have that, and descendants from other religious groups have it in the same way (and this is what makes the modern situation so different from any earlier situation), then what becomes of individual traditions? In an age of the confluence of cultures the only grounds for the maintenance of separate traditions in belief are racial or national. I believe in the maintenance of separate national traditions when they arise naturally with their spontaneous geographical separate-nesses. I do not believe that all Frenchmen should become Chinese or vice versa. But Frenchmen live in France and have a common geography as well as history. A common history alone is not enough to preserve a tradition in these days without a conscious and deliberate building of social barriers, and I cannot see how such a conscious and deliberate building of social barriers can be justified without a racial philosophy. That is why I said in my article that only the un-American (and it is un-American) notion of the Chosen People can justify the continued separateness of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. I agree with much of what Milton Konvitz says, but in the light of this fact I draw very different conclusions.

My reply to Rabbi Baeck's temperate and courteous article (*O si sic omnes!*) would run along the same lines. He gives a historical explanation of how Reform Judaism arose together with interesting remarks on the special nature of Jewish awareness, but again I don't see how his point of view can be maintained without falling back on a rather simple racialism, which I cannot for the life of me reconcile with the characteristically American point of view and still less with the facts of cultural history as we can best ascertain them. And might I say that I would not be as disturbed as Rabbi Baeck supposes by Elisha ben Abuyah's visit to Cornell. I think many of my colleagues at Cornell have regarded me as the same kind of heretic in the academic world as so many of COMMENTARY's readers seem to regard me with

respect to Judaism. I feel continually impelled to challenge orthodoxies and accepted compromises. Perhaps, after all, that is the Jew in me.

FINALLY, let me repeat my profound conviction that in problems as complicated and as emotionally involved as this is, there can be no final conclusion, and every man must do what he can to develop his own viewpoint with as much knowledge, wisdom, and integrity as he can muster. God forbid that I should consider my words final or my point of view infallible. Further, I feel rather like Plato at the end of his discussion of poetry in the tenth book of *The Republic*: having proved logically that poets are enemies of the good society and must not be allowed in it, he asks the poets to prove that he is wrong, and if they can do so he will gladly accept them, for he has always taken delight in poetry. If anybody can prove me wrong (and I mean *prove*, answering point for point the arguments I have adduced) I shall listen to him with pleasure. I have no axe to grind, one way or another. I wish to lead as full, wise, and fruitful a life as possible, and to do what I can to help others to do the same, and my speculations are guided (as far as I am consciously aware) by that ambition only. I don't mind disagreement or argument—indeed, I am grateful to Milton Konvitz and Rabbi Baeck for their courteous and thought-provoking replies; but I do mind and I bitterly resent the shallow personal attacks I received in such great quantity through the mail.

Our first duty to ourselves and to others is intellectual honesty: we must follow the argument, as Socrates did, whithersoever it takes us, and not be deflected by self-love or pride. A position is not necessarily right because I have maintained it or lived by it all my life, nor is it necessarily wrong if it proves disturbing. All our views are the mixed product of freedom and necessity, of inquiry and prejudice, of conviction and self-love. I am in the deepest sense an agnostic in that I realize that the human mind is incapable of discovering the ultimate truth about anything. In so far as we are capable of wisdom, we become so by learning from as many different sources as possible. *Ayzeahoo chacham halomed mekol-adam*: "Who is wise? He who learns from all men." So says Ben Zoma in the fourth *perek*, and I interpret *mekol-adam* to mean *bain shehu ben-brith ubain sheaino ben-brith*—"whether he be a son of the Covenant or he be not a son of the Covenant." Konvitz will say that that is a thoroughly Jewish point of view. So be it.

DAVID DAICHES

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

The New Middle Classes

WHITE COLLAR. By C. WRIGHT MILLS.
Oxford University Press. 378 pp. \$5.00.

Reviewed by EVERETT C. HUGHES

PROFESSOR MILLS had fun writing this book about the ever-increasing proportion of us who wear suit jackets and neckties at our work and who are paid salaries rather than hourly base rates plus production bonuses. It is rather cruel fun, but the reader won't suffer too much for himself, for it is not quite a book for those who would find it most bitterly applicable to their own persons and fates (although he does take a crack at professors: they're not very bright). The kind of fellow who will read the book will enjoy the quick, vivid sketches of the new entrepreneur, the live-wire, the old veteran, and of other kinds of white collar people. The lively retelling of the stories of Kitty Foyle and Alice Adams to make his points (a practice all too rare in these days when a "scientific" social scientist is allowed to use only those fictions which well up from his unexplored unconscious) and Mills's own bursts of imagination and original aphorisms make it a book one can enjoyably, even profitably, open and read at will.

But maybe a book which is supposed to present a portentous trend and portray a great change in the constitution of society—hence of men—should not be one that can be opened and read here and there at will. Stephen Spender, in his autobiographical *World Within World*, tells of Auden's habit of taking out a good line from a poem at the slightest criticism from a friend. But he always saves the line for future use. I fear Mills either saved up a lot of lines for this book or that he thinks up altogether too many lines (although I suppose that is a better fault than the current endless thinking up of words by people who can't make sentences, let alone lines). Mills really ought to write a poem or something to work off some of his literary exuberance, so that he could produce a work cleaner of line when he reports interesting research. At any rate, I would advise the

reader, who will very likely get lost in the maze of the text now and again, to refer frequently to the table of contents; for the said table does present the main course of the argument in a sort of "Off Again, On Again, Gone Again" progression, but with more metaphor than Finnegun used in his telegram.

Mills starts with a section on the Old Middle Classes—people who owned the property with which they worked—and on its dissipation through a transformation in the nature and distribution of property rights. The New Middle Class, about which the book is written, consists, in the business and industrial world, of the people in the managerial bureaucracies. The "new entrepreneur," key figure of the new middle class, does not build up and own his own business, but "makes a zigzag pattern upward within and between established bureaucracies"; he "services the powers that be, in the hopes of getting his cut." To use my own version, the new entrepreneur exploits himself; he is his own capital. He assesses his potentialities (especially his personality) and puts himself on the market. He decides whether to invest himself in Consolidated Customized Clothing or in Synthetic Drugs. If he buys a house, it is not really that he may live in it or own it, but that he and the wife in it may help him and his boss realize these potentialities.

Below the new entrepreneur and following in order in the book are the bureaucratized professional people, the technicians, the sales people, and, last and lowest, the girls who keep the "enormous file" of modern business papers.

The aim of all this is to prepare for the kill. All these white-collar people have lost all sense of joy in their work. They work only that they may live. In itself, this work is a meaningless thing that keeps one away from home and whose demands alienate the person from himself. All he gets from it is money, illusions, and compensation. The illusion may be that of prestige (but is not prestige one of the reallest illusions?), the compensation may be the masochistic pleasure of submitting one's self to the authority and prestige of others. Life is cen-

tered about leisure, as is shown by the constant effort to reduce the hours of work. Social estrangement, self-alienation—these are Mills's key words about all these people. In politics, they apathetically go with the crowd. "They are irritable, but without passion," "too afraid to grumble, too hysterical in their applause." And, the book's last word: "The new middle classes are up for sale."

No DOUBT these things are true in some, indeed in great, measure. But they are not the only things that are true. There are, in the files of students of society, plenty of cases of people who live at work rather than at home, and who regard work as a pleasant and sociable escape. A recent study of individuals who are close to retirement indicates that in most occupations people do not look forward to giving up work and spending their days at leisure. Steel workers hate to give up; they like the roaring, gleaming mill. Coal miners, on the other hand, at least claim they will quit as soon as they can. As for self-alienation and social meaninglessness, is there evidence that more than some very small proportion of people in any epoch were fortunate enough to have work that was also their hobby? Or that, even for those few, a good deal of the satisfaction did not lie in their social life at work rather than in contemplation of the beauty of the product of labor?

These remarks are not evidence that Mills is wrong. Even if I backed them up with a lot of statistical proof and contrary cases it would not prove him wrong in his estimate of the trend he describes. They are meant merely to indicate that he might be right in the main and in the mass, and yet very much off the beam as to what the psychological and social implications of the trend are and will be.

In an odd sort of way, Mills appears to share the values of those against whom he is most bitter. He, too, complains (like a boss or a personnel man) that people don't love their work. He, too, implies that the world would be better if everyone did consider his work the full realization of himself as he would like to be. He, too, thinks work-life and leisure-life must be a unity, or else the one will be real and the other phony. Probably all of us share such values. But now and again I contemplate with horror the thought of a world which would really insist that a man could not escape from some domestic den of vipers to an office where he did something entirely routine and meaningless

in pleasant company; which would not allow a man to earn his living at some work that he hates without having a lot of people worried about him and wondering whether he can be trusted. What makes us think that all parts of life should be so closely knit, should infuse each other, or that if they remain separate, one is more "real" than another?

I am not certain that I reviewed or could "review" Mills's book as one abstracts and criticizes some neat piece of research. The book is such a combination of facts, brilliant lines and paragraphs, metaphors, tendentious reasoning, and sardonic contempt, that it defies that kind of review. But he has found out a lot about the new middle classes. What he has found out he has put before the reader in a mess of strong Mills curry. The flavor might be quite different if the same facts were dished out with the sauce of other emotions and other ideological preoccupations than his.

The Religious Thinking of Milton Steinberg

A BELIEVING JEW: THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF MILTON STEINBERG. Harcourt, Brace. 318 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by WILL HERBERG

MILTON STEINBERG, who died on March 20, 1950, at the age of forty-six, was a man of notable gifts. He possessed a penetrating mind and a most varied culture, a warm heart and great capacities for friendship, deep faith, and a wide reading in theology and profound concern with theological problems. A selection from the writings of such a man should constitute a work of real significance.

This volume, which is presented as such a selection, is a disappointment. It by no means does justice to the quality of the mind and spirit of the man. There are some good, even very good things in it, but it does not reflect the full maturity of his thought and insight. Perhaps this was inevitable; perhaps the thinking of his most mature period was not adequately precipitated in the writings he left behind him. However that may be, it still remains that one gets here a most insufficient and, in some cases, even misleading impression of what Milton Steinberg thought about Jewish religious existence in the last years of his life, when its prob-

lems preoccupied him with a particular force. Besides which, the editor's quite incomprehensible failure to give the dates for most of the pieces, which stretch over a decade or more, makes a satisfactory grasp of the direction of his thinking virtually impossible for one who has to depend upon this volume alone.

IN SOME respects, however, the papers in this book do define fairly well the main lines of Steinberg's thinking. In his convictions about the status and future of Judaism in the United States, Milton Steinberg remained essentially a Reconstructionist, and his thinking in this area reflects the characteristic strength and weaknesses of that position. The strength lies in its realistic appraisal of Jewish community life in America; its basic weakness, rooted in the hidden secularism of the Reconstructionist approach, is its inability to get to the heart of Jewish existence and therefore to provide a compelling motive for the "survivalism" with which it is so concerned. In the papers, "The Future of Judaism in America," "A Specimen Jew," and others, Jewishness is conceived as "religious culturalism," essentially as a culture brought by immigrant Jews to America. The argument against assimilation is conducted throughout on this level, in terms of the social and psychological consequences of turning one's back on one's cultural origins and losing one's cultural identity. Assimilation, we are told, means on the one hand, "ceasing to be what you are," and on the other, "the deliberate throwing away of a large cultural tradition." But it is surely obvious that the whole course of American history has been, for the immigrant, a ceasing to be what he was and a dissolution of the culture he had brought with him into the common stream of American life. Herbert Hoover has obviously ceased to be what he (his Alsatian great-grandfather) was, and Dwight Eisenhower is not engaged in preserving the "large cultural tradition" his German ancestors brought with them.

The Reconstructionist conception of Jewish existence, which Milton Steinberg more or less shared throughout his life, simply overlooks the crucial point that Jewish "survivalism"—*if Jewishness is defined in socio-cultural terms*—runs plainly counter to the entire pattern of American life. For whereas all other immigrant groups have constituted essentially *transitional* phenomena of one or two generations, making their specific cultural contribution to American life and disappearing as separate entities, Jewish ex-

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MOSES

by Sholem Asch

The author of MOSES, with all human behavior as his province, has concerned himself increasingly in recent years with the patterns of western culture, seeking the roots of our ethics. It was almost inevitable that he should climax his great career with the story of Moses, for it was through Moses that mankind first learned that life might be conducted according to a standard of right and wrong, that conduct might be judged other than in the light of expediency.

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istence in America—for the “survivalists” at any rate—seems to be predicated on the expectation of permanence and self-perpetuation. This expectation, which is not merely expectation but insistence, cannot be adequately grounded on a conception which holds the Jewish group to be a cultural entity not radically different in nature from the other immigrant groups that came to our shores in the course of the past three hundred years. In the Reconstructionist analysis, there is no real sense of the *uniqueness* of Jewish existence because the concept that can alone give meaning to this uniqueness—the divine election and vocation of Israel—is either ignored or rejected. That means that Jewish existence is conceived in an essentially secular manner, and the logic of “secular Judaism” is either total assimilation or else an unreal clinging to yesterday’s particular form of Jewish life. At bottom, what is Reconstructionism but an American adaptation of Dubnow’s “Diaspora nationalism”?

Milton Steinberg’s continuing involvement in Reconstructionism—he was, after all, one of its outstanding leaders—obscured the better understanding of the “mystery” of Jewish existence that was really his. How vastly different is the conception of Jewishness suggested by his unforgettable novel, *As a Driven Leaf*, from the Reconstructionist commonplaces that recur in the pages of this volume. Yet even in these pages there is a flash of something better. In a sermon on the establishment of the State of Israel (“Latter Day Miracle: Israel”), Milton Steinberg, quoting Berdyaev and Carl Mayer, insists that “the continued existence of Jewry down the centuries is rationally inexplicable; by every sociological law, the Jews should have perished long ago.” Had he lived to follow up this insight, he would, I am convinced, have broken out of the Reconstructionist confines and said something new and significant about the “mystery of Israel.”

IN A sober assessment, “The Test of Time,” written in February 1950 on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of *The Reconstructionist*, Milton Steinberg, after giving due credit to the Reconstructionist movement for its “sociological” and community achievement, called attention to the wide differences over theology which compelled him to register “the gravest reservation from the prevailing Reconstructionist position.” In his view, theology was not an academic irrelevancy, a peripheral concern for specialists. In a magnificent essay, “The Social

Crisis and the Retreat of God,” he emphasizes that “as a man thinks of ultimates, so he tends to deal with immediates,” and he repeats with approval Chesterton’s remark that the most relevant inquiry which a landlady can address to a prospective lodger is concerning his theology. He was among the first to raise a vigorous protest against “this business of substituting society for God as an object of worship and as the goal of religious activity” (“A Protest Against a New Cult”). To Milton Steinberg, theology—thinking about religion—was in the truest sense thinking about life, one’s own life, and the life of mankind.

It is as a theologian that Milton Steinberg was really most himself as a thinker. Yet it is in the area of theology that this volume is most seriously defective, even misleading, in the picture it gives of his mind. For Milton Steinberg’s most creative work in theology was done in the last years of his life; his entire cast of thought was transformed in this period. Yet the best writings of this period find no place in this volume—some probably because they were not in sufficiently finished form to permit publication, others for reasons that I cannot presume to explain. His memorable paper, “Theological Issues of the Hour,” presented at the 1949 convention of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, is not included, nor is his article on Kierkegaard. But without these, especially without the former, no one can really have an idea of what he thought about God, man, and the world.

His earlier attitude was quite “Hellenic,” as he himself confesses. The first essay in this volume, “God and the World’s End,” attempts to solve the problem of evil in terms of an evolutionary pantheism, recalling Samuel Alexander’s philosophy of emergence, according to which “God as He mounts from level to level [of cosmic evolution] is, like an embryo bursting forth from the womb, still stained and flecked with the stuff of his immersion,” so that “man’s inhumanity to man . . . is, from the religious viewpoint, a caul still firmly fixed to the infant but destined to be sloughed as under the divine impulse mankind grows to fuller stature.” This kind of cosmic optimism ultimately became an abomination to him, as one can see by reading the soberly realistic paper, “The Depth of Evil,” in which he concludes that even “when man is at his highest, he is still a creature irritable and aggressive, proud and vain, selfish and self-deluding . . . he is sinful, and evil inheres in him.”

But there it is, that first paper, with no date and no suggestion that its basic thesis was repudiated by the author in later years. And not only that paper; there are others, too, permeated with a pantheistic immanentism that always ends up in the virtual divinization of man ("Man is in a sense God in miniature") and a reassertion of human self-sufficiency. Milton Steinberg eventually came to see how thoroughly un-Biblical this Greco-Oriental immanentism was, but there is little in this book to show this. The Rabbinical Assembly paper might have done it, but it is not included. The Rabbinical Assembly paper might also have helped to undo the unfortunate impression produced by the references to Christianity scattered through this volume. These references never rise above the commonplaces which Christians and Jews so often make use of in discussing each other's religion.

It was apparently found necessary to include the well-known attack upon COMMENTARY in this volume. This is not the place, nor do I think there is any longer the necessity, for an extended comment on this paper. Let me merely say what I said to Milton Steinberg as he was composing it, that even if there were some truth in every one of the charges he made—which I did not take to be the case—the whole would nevertheless not add up to a true bill. The logic of the indictment—though not, of course, its intent—was the condemnation of COMMENTARY for refusing to turn itself into a spiritless house-organ of Jewish "official" opinion; its net effect would therefore be to encourage the self-important philistines in their hostility to whatever they could not understand or control. All this I said to Milton Steinberg at the time. I did not succeed in dissuading him, but neither am I persuaded after a careful rereading and reconsideration of his indictment.

It would be hard for me to express adequately the deep regard, love, and admiration that I had for Milton Steinberg in the years of our friendship and in which I hold his memory. It is particularly painful, therefore, that this volume, which for so many will be their introduction to Milton Steinberg and perhaps all they will ever know of him, should be so unsatisfactory. For lesser men it might be a sufficient memorial—but not for Milton Steinberg, the dedicated teacher in Israel, who until his last hour kept on thinking, struggling, and growing in power and spirit.

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Through Eustace Tilley's Looking-Glass

THE NEW YORKER TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY ALBUM, 1925-1950. Harper.
\$5.00.

Reviewed by MILTON KLONSKY

THERE is a cartoon by Carl Rose in this Album which, by self-reflection, reflects the situation of the *New Yorker* as well. It shows the divine interior of the Radio City Cathedral (on 50th Street, opposite St. Patrick's) as seen from the seventh balcony, with thousands of paying worshipers craning forward to watch a tiny figure of a *chanteuse* on stage haloed by the beam of an enormous spotlight. She is singing neither "Ave Maria" nor "The Star Spangled Banner," but (as the caption says): "... hold tight hold tight fooradeackasaki want some sea food Mama." What's so funny?

Of course, this drawing is only a literal depiction of a scene in Radio City that takes place every matinee—but that's just the point, the dead-pan look is the joke itself. Were we to see

it in the Coney Island mirrors of popular culture (as we have grown accustomed to do), such a freakish scene would have perfectly regular American features. From the *New Yorker's* point of view, however, we have the illusion of watching it all from the inside while not being taken in.

As an agnostic inside the cathedral of mass culture, rather than a superstitious peasant or, worse, an ordinary heathen intellectual, the *New Yorker* can turn its wit both ways. The cartoons, especially, are best seen against a background of ads for perfumes, jewelry, furs, convertibles, cognacs, and the rest. Published in the *Woman's Home Companion* or *Collier's*, where cures for eczema and bargains in laundry soap are advertised, they would lose much of their flair. And when they are crowded side by side, one after the other, as in this large anniversary Album, even the most lively look somewhat dispirited. They need the large stage and the plush hangings of the Big Time.

Though the *New Yorker's* standard prose seems to be written by Eustace Tilley himself, who has a taste for the epigram, the cartoons preserve their own wisecracking American flavors. What the epigram is to European style,

the wisecrack is to the American. For the wisecrack, it's not so much the way a thing is said, the rise of the verb or droop of the adverb, but the quiddity of the thing itself that counts. Anyone can tell the difference by comparing the snuffy "Talk of the Town" section with the squibs at the bottom of the back pages, or, better still, with the cartoons in the Album.

The purpose of these cartoons is to get the joke across, boff, yak, peal, or squeal, and every other concern of "art" is subordinated to this end. Now the joke in America, especially the dirty story—which has taken the place of the old ballads as a folk art—demands a certain precision and sense of form to be successful. The successful cartoons in the *New Yorker*, therefore, are all carefully draped around the gag, a cut above the mass produced comic strips in the papers. They are more sophisticated, more fashionable, and appeal to an audience that attends the ballet, art exhibitions, concerts, et al., and is indifferent to the fate of Tillie the Toiler. And yet, when the drawing in both is looked at steadily without the charm of the *New Yorker* to distract us, the Colonel's Lady and Tilly the Toiler are discovered to be the same underneath. In one of the cartoons by Claude,

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year in chute-like deflations and sky-rocket inflations of spirit, hell-bent with the sky the limit, that any distortion seems flattened out by the reality. Even Dali's brand of surrealism found a quiet home in the shop windows on Madison Avenue. And this, I think, is the point of the Joke—the normal and regular line is the excessive, the excessive is the normal.

As an example of such excess, every reader of the *New Yorker* knows Charles Addams's cartoon of the young man skating on a moonlit pond with his girl, holding both her hands in two of his, while another curves itself firmly around her waist. This is only a literal rendering, à la Brueghel, of that homely bit of American folk wisdom about men having "too many hands." Addams has a somewhat similar cartoon showing a witch on a heath pouring an economy-sized box of "Witch's Brew" into a cauldron steaming with toads and serpents, explaining to a friend: "It's marvelous! All you do is add water." And then there is the one by Robert Day, in which the counterman says to the short-order cook who is proudly displaying his *chef d'oeuvre* on an enormous platter: "All right, you've made the biggest hamburger sandwich in the world. So now what?" And the one by George Price, in which a carload of his marvelous East Side characters come rocking out of the subway and onto the street, still jammed together, reading newspapers and hanging on imaginary straps, while a cop on the beat says: "All right, boys—break it up." Or another by Price, showing a middle-aged man sitting starry-eyed on the lap of a department-store Santa Claus, with his proud mother nearby remarking to a friend: "It's been such a struggle, but we've managed to keep alive his belief." And finally, a cartoon by Carl Rose of a Hollywood set with a line of chorus girls standing on the keyboard of a huge piano. As the director explains to the producer: "Now in this scene, Franz Schubert, the composer, falls asleep and dreams his melody while the girls dance it out on the piano keys. Get it?"

If I get it, the catch in all of these cartoons is that of the far-fetched and way-out brought down to earth, the absurd made reasonable because, after all, it is surpassed every day. There are a few major themes—The War Between the Sexes, with its various sub-divisions, such as The Strain of Marriage, The Bachelor's Mirage, The Chorus Girl vs. The Sugar Daddy, etc.; The Hostility of Things and Gadgets; The Pre-

cocity of Children; The Lunacy of Artists, Radicals, and Intellectuals; The Pomposity of Politicians and Bank Directors; The Absurdity of Old Maids and Suburban Matrons; and so on. Their variety, which is prodigious, is derived from the greater Variety, or vaudeville, of American life.

To look at this vaudeville reflected in the *New Yorker's* anniversary Album is to be aware how little the routine has changed in twenty-five years. From the boom of Coolidge to the depression to the Second World War up to the present the *New Yorker* has preserved its characteristic humor and, even through the worst times, its jokes have rarely been mean or bitter or cruel. For the spirit of this famous magazine belongs to the timeless 20's and the Good Time forever renewed, the only pretty ring time, when the world has a sheen like the gloss on its pages. Though there are a couple of *New Masses*-type drawings of breadlines and lynchings in the Album, and a few published during the war ridiculing the Japanese for their bad teeth and bad English, these are merely slips in the pursuit of the eternal Good Time.

On the last page of the Album, however, is a Charles Addams cartoon of a space ship, perhaps twenty-five years from now, being loaded like Noah's ark with two of each kind. Though not shown in the drawing, a pair of American co-eds are presumably at the controls. And what livelier reading matter could they take with them on the long trip through space than the new *New Yorker's* next twenty-fifth anniversary Album?

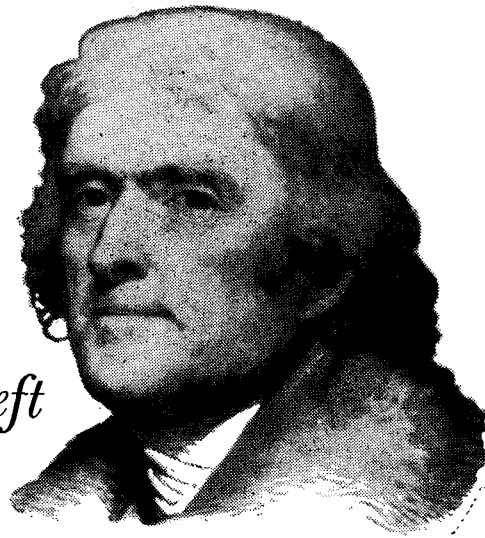
America the Beautiful and Damned

THE IMPACT OF AMERICA ON EUROPEAN CULTURE. By MARTIN COOPER, JOHN LEHMANN, PERRY MILLER, J. E. MORPURGO, SEAN O'FAOLAIN, BERTRAND RUSSELL. Beacon Press. 100 pp. \$1.75.

Reviewed by WILLIAM PHILLIPS

OF THE six essays in this book about America's influence on European culture—one by an American professor, one by an Irish writer, the four others by Englishmen—at least three find the influence harmful, implying that America exports reaction to Europe. Sean O'Faolain takes us to task because Irish priests are more "illiberal" in this country than in Ireland; J. E. Morpurgo argues that American culture, dom-

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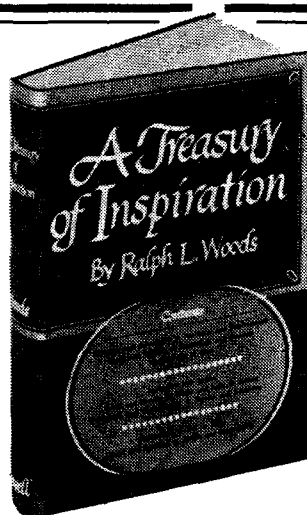
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inated by Hollywood, has outlawed the rebel; and Martin Cooper, in a discussion of American music, concludes that our "democratization of taste" makes for empty proficiency in musical performance and generally debases art. The essay by the lone American, Perry Miller, is seemingly a defense of the homeland, but it turns out that what Miller likes about America is that in its own way it is even more revolutionary, more Marxist, than Europe.

The two best essays are by Bertrand Russell, writing with his usual urbanity and insight, and John Lehmann, providing a sensitive comment on American literature. But even these two informed and judicious pieces occasionally fall in with the stock picture of America abroad, as when Russell says that America, once a symbol of radicalism, has now become the "bulwark of capitalism," and Lehmann claims that much of our recent fiction is given to an unhealthy cynicism and "spiritual emptiness" that "may have a corrupting influence on European literature."

WHAT these essays have in common is the assumption that this country is *on trial*—an assumption behind much European writing on America today. We are familiar with the crude anti-Americanism now popular on the Continent, and its routine charges of vulgarity, imperialism, reaction, militarism, commercialism, intellectual emptiness, etc. But this indictment has become so much a part of European thinking that even people friendly to America are placed in the position of attorneys for the defense, compelled to marshal evidence showing that our virtues outweigh our faults.

Such an approach to American (or any other) culture is neither fruitful nor normal. Nor am I convinced that there is a "question of American culture" apart from the social and aesthetic problems of all modern culture, affecting Europe as well as America. In the past, a national culture or period in history was generally examined in all its diversity and as part of the larger patterns of civilization, not simply to determine whether it was good or bad. Who has ever thought of evaluating 19th-century Russia, or France in the 18th century, or Elizabethan England, in such black and white terms? Even totalitarian societies, which are after all beyond the pale of our social morality, are not approached that schematically.

This is not to say our critics are entirely wrong. On the contrary, I think it might be

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stated once and for all that much criticism of America by Europeans—and American liberals—is at least partly true. What is objectionable is that it is one-sided, excessive, and usually made by people who are far from disinterested and whose own social and aesthetic values are hardly superior. One would be sympathetic if our critics spoke for a community of letters or a true internationalism—but then they would also be detached from the dominant trends in Europe and opposed to the regimes beyond the Iron Curtain. We are suspicious, however, when writers who are in no sense rebels and have accommodated themselves to Stalinism, suddenly discover that America is the arch enemy of progress. In the name of what higher form of democracy does Sartre, for example, or O'Faolain—or any one of our own "liberals"—find American institutions reactionary? And where is the more advanced aesthetic?

The most telling criticism is directed against our commercial mass culture, what Martin Cooper calls the "democratization of taste." Yet those who object to the enormous consumption of culture in this country forget that it is an outgrowth of our free-wheeling democracy. I think the question of the kind of art our culture favors is serious, but it involves the

relation of art to social stratification, and the tensions between aesthetic tradition and the uninhibited forms of an "open society." Though we are deeply committed to the great tradition of European art, the fact remains it was created by an elite in a class society, and one cannot raise the banners both of cultural and social democracy without exploring the connection between the two. Our anti-American critics have it both ways: they condemn our art in the name of aristocracy, and our politics in the name of democracy.

THE current anti-Americanism is neither profound nor consistent. Why then should it have arisen?

The causes are many and complex, but I can only touch on the primary ones here.

Perhaps the most important factor is what might be called the "Stalinization" of European thinking and of much of our native liberalism, by which I do not mean that all the intellectuals affected are Stalinized, but rather that Stalinism has managed to impose many of its assumptions and attitudes on them. The image of America as a political and cultural menace, here as well as abroad, is something that has been propagated by the incessant efforts of the

*He was called everything from
"a brilliant journalist" to
"the most dangerous under-
graduate Yale has seen in years."*



William F. Buckley, Jr.

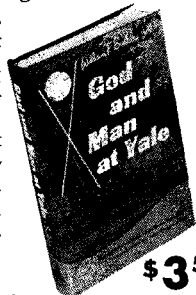
author of

God and Man at Yale

The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom"

Introduction by John Chamberlain

Buckley's career at Yale (class of '50) was brilliant and stormy. The class historian described him: "The most outspoken *News* chairman in 70 years, William F. Buckley, Jr., neatly undercut tolerance, tomfoolery, and everything to the left of Senator Taft. *News* editorials, for once, were regularly read: 'What'd Buckley say this morning?' He was his Class' Bright Young Man, among many bright young men; for better or for worse—and perhaps significantly—we had none to match him." His first book amounts to a declaration of war against the present drift of American education. Using his own alma mater, Yale, as a case in point, he shows how "academic freedom" is being used to undermine traditional American values. Buckley is an eloquent spokesman for the new generation of conservatives — the "new radicals" on the university scene.



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Communists; and many of the Europeans who question this image do so only in terms of size—that is, they believe that America may be the lesser evil by contrast to Russia.

But there is a larger sense in which Europe—and "advanced" thinking throughout the world—has been Stalinized: it has been infiltrated by the Marxist ideology of progress and socialism to the point where it is ready to accept as historically inevitable the doom of Western civilization and the messianic role of the proletariat in the creation of a new world. As a result, the "progressive" mind here and abroad, confined in the past to liberal ideas and reforms, has acquired a new faith in the forces of revolution. And to contain the ambiguities of such a position there has arisen a "progressive" myth, joining 19th-century liberalism with elements of the Communist philosophy, that has radically affected the thinking of many people who do not follow the Marxist line in every respect and in many cases even regard themselves as anti-Marxist. On the whole, identification in one way or another with this myth has come to be synonymous with enlightenment, with the triumph of humanism—with simple decency. Much of the idealism of our time has been soaked up by this blend of good will with a fatalistic view of history first conceived by Hegel and then given a practical twist by Marx. That such a force as Stalinism has not only won a monopoly on socialism but is also the beneficiary of our zealous humanitarianism is a final irony.

An essential feature of the "progressive myth" is that it carries the determinism and libertarian spirit of the Marxist tradition without being directly committed, at least on the surface, to the specific theories of Marx and Lenin or to the distinct aims of Stalinism—at the same time that it does have a soft spot for any movement that presents itself as "revolutionary," especially if led by the Communists. This is why, it seems to me, most sympathizers with Stalinism both here and abroad connect themselves with the ideals of justice proclaimed by the Marxist system rather than with the totalitarian state in Russia. Or why Communist "peace" slogans are so attractive to people who vaguely recall that Lenin was against war but choose to forget that Lenin opposed only "imperialist" wars and supported "progressive" ones, both of which are specifically defined within the Marxist scheme only according to Marxist canons.

THE question remains why the mythology of history and progress that has grown up around the Communist movement and is so shrewdly exploited by it should have become so potent just now, thirty-five years after the Russian Revolution. The chief reasons, I think, lie in the economic and physical exhaustion of Europe, and a blundering American policy that permitted Russia to become so powerful. Caught between its own moral defeatism and fear of the Red Army, the Continent has naturally been attracted to a revolutionary ideology that promises everything—peace, progress, economic improvement, Russian friendship, and

above all a resurgence of national energies. And if the millions of Europeans who seem to be under the sway of Stalinism have not been affected by the terror of the Russian regime, it is because they are moved by a vision of an equalitarian and creative society, which they imagine the Communists will help them to achieve.

Even non-Communists, who have only the vaguest idea of goals and policies, have dedicated themselves to being revolutionary at all costs, competing with each other in their "radicalism" and their opposition to "reaction." In this atmosphere it is not surprising to find a prevailing friendliness to Stalinism, and a wide-

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spread "neutralism" or hostility to America, the symbol of all the reactionary forces thwarting man's salvation through history.

American culture has in the past often been questioned by Europeans, as in the famous attack by Duhamel; while the idea of a mass tyranny of taste in this country goes back to de Tocqueville. But the criticism was not necessarily identified with progress, and only recently has it become part of a *campaign* against America. Unfortunately for those of us who are not uncritical of American life, the current "trial" of America, far from having any therapeutic value, can only serve the purpose of Stalinism, or promote a native chauvinism in reaction, and generally increase the present confusion. It is, perhaps, the paradox of our time that one of the greatest obstacles to political clarity and aesthetic advance—and therefore to progress—should be the mythology of progress that has grown up under the aegis of Marxism.

The Voice of Love

SHERWOOD ANDERSON. By IRVING HOWE.
William Sloane. 271 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by GRANVILLE HICKS

"THIS book," Mr. Howe tells us, "is partly an outgrowth of an involved and intimate relationship I have had with Sherwood Anderson's writings, a relationship I believe not unique to myself. When I read *Winesburg, Ohio* in my adolescence, I felt that a new world had been opened to me, new possibilities of experience, new dimensions of emotion. Not many years later I found myself rejecting Anderson's work: I was impatient with his vagueness, superior to his uncertainty. Yet he still meant more to me than other writers of unquestionably greater achievement." The critic's purpose in the present book was "to achieve a synthesis of feeling and opinion toward Anderson's work" and to call attention to "a precious remnant particularly valuable to our day and situation."

Mr. Howe gives an excellent brief account of social conditions in Ohio at the time Anderson was growing up, and he presents a clearer record than I have seen elsewhere of Anderson's career as an advertising and business man and of his dual existence in business and letters. There are some striking discrepancies between

Mr. Howe's facts and the Anderson legend, for which the novelist himself was partly responsible, though it was gladly received and magnified by his contemporaries. In his obituary essay on Anderson, Lionel Trilling succinctly stated the legendary version of the climactic event in Anderson's life: "At the age of forty-five, as everyone knows, he found himself the manager of a small paint factory in Elyria, Ohio; one day, in the very middle of a sentence he was dictating, he walked out of the factory and gave himself to literature and truth." Actually Anderson was thirty-seven when he left the factory, and his departure was not so much a romantic gesture as the beginning of a serious psychic collapse. He had little choice but to give up the factory, and during the next few years he supported himself by working for an advertising agency while devoting as much time as possible to his writing.

The true version of the incident is important, not because it debunks the legend but because it points to the existence of deep conflicts and uncertainties. Uncertainty is, indeed, the key to Anderson's character as Mr. Howe interprets it. During the early part of his life he was racked by social uncertainty—an unsureness as to what his place in society was and what he wanted it to be. Then he was torn by literary uncertainty—the inability to discover where he could and should go. And underlying both, always as a cause but never as the only cause, was the uncertainty that was central in his psyche. The character of his psychological uncertainty, as Mr. Howe tells the story, reveals itself most clearly in his relations with his four wives.

YET the desire for self-expression and the desire to become a writer, not quite the same thing, were strong; and, stimulated by the atmosphere of the Chicago Renaissance, Anderson stumbled through two apprentice novels and produced the astonishing *Winesburg*. Of this book Mr. Howe writes eloquently and with understanding, accepting and in part explaining the magic it held for so many of us when it was first published—and held for Mr. Howe and presumably some of his contemporaries many years later. "But the final effectiveness of this prose," he writes, "is in its prevalent tone of tender inclusiveness. . . . The ultimate unity of the book is a unity of feeling, a sureness of warmth, and a readiness to accept *Winesburg's* lost grotesques with the embrace of

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humility. Many American writers have taken as their theme the loss of love in the modern world, but few, if any at all, have so thoroughly realized it in the accents of love."

Never again in the course of his book does Mr. Howe speak with such enthusiasm. He praises a number of the later short stories, finds excellence in the first part of *Poor White*, selects passages here and there in other books for favorable comment, but for the most part the record he sets forth is one of failure. And the picture he gives of Anderson in the later 20's and the 30's is the picture of a confused and unhappy man.

Mr. Howe is never ungenerous to Anderson as a person: if, for example, he condemns the intellectual irresponsibility of Anderson's involvement with the Communists, he also points out that he had a strong feeling for the workers he knew, a "sense of plebeian fraternity." Yet, whatever may be said of Anderson's virtues, the emphasis falls on what Trilling so sternly rebuked as his "mindlessness."

Detail by detail the indictment is unanswerable. Yet Mr. Howe himself, in the end, draws back and refuses to echo Trilling's sentence of doom. That is one way, he says, of interpreting

Anderson. "But there is another, more fruitful way of reading his work: as the expression of a sensitive witness to the national experience and as the achievement of a story teller who created a small body of fiction unique in American writing for the lyrical purity of its feeling. So regarded, his best work becomes a durable part of the American literary structure."

"Unquestionably durable," Mr. Howe continues, "is Anderson's testimony on the most dramatic social development in American life, the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society." This is true, but the case can be even more strongly stated, for this transition was not a peculiarly American phenomenon, though it took a particular form in this country, nor can one speak as if the transition had been accomplished once and for all in, say, 1890. The revolution continues, for America and for all the world, and only a very superior person indeed will say that he fully understands it. Bewilderment and loneliness have always been part of the human experience, but for us in our day, as for Anderson in his, they have what we think at any rate is a peculiar poignance. Anderson's sensitiveness, which was almost certainly related to his many uncertainties, en-

abled him now and again to show us the bewilderment and loneliness of others.

Mr. Howe is right in his steadfast refusal, which sometimes seems to run against his own logic, to dispose of Anderson as naive or adolescent. We were not mistaken when we felt, back in 1920, that *Winesburg* was a revelation, and if the miracle was infrequently repeated, we still have reasons for gratitude.

"Surely," Mr. Howe writes at the very end, "there is, there should be a place in our culture, even if only a minor one, for Sherwood Anderson. His faults, his failures and defeats can hardly be ignored; he was almost always limited in moral sensibility and social perspective. Yet there were a few moments when he spoke, as almost no one else among American writers, with the voice of love."

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

EVERETT C. HUGHES is professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, editor of the *American Journal of Sociology*, and the author of *French Canada in Transition*.

WILL HERBERG is managing editor of the new quarterly *Judaism*. His book *Judaism and Modern Man* has just been published.

MILTON KLONSKY has written for *COMMENTARY* and other periodicals.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS is an editor of *Partisan Review*.

GRANVILLE HICKS's most recent contribution to *COMMENTARY* was "The Liberals Who Haven't Learned" (April 1951).

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